



City of Cambridge

O-10.

IN CITY COUNCIL

September 10, 2001

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
 COUNCILLOR BORN
 COUNCILLOR BRAUDE
 COUNCILLOR DAVIS
 COUNCILLOR DECKER
 MAYOR GALLUCCIO
 VICE MAYOR MAHER
 COUNCILLOR REEVES
 COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

WHEREAS: A recent study by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health shows that one in five teenage girls in Massachusetts has suffered sexual or physical abuse from a boyfriend (see attached Boston Globe article); and

WHEREAS: The study also found that girls abused by their boyfriends are much more likely to use drugs or alcohol, have unsafe sex, acquire eating disorders and consider or attempt suicide; and

WHEREAS: The study was designed to be representative of all public high school students in Massachusetts; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to confer with the Superintendent of Schools, the Commissioner of Public Health, the Police Commissioner and the Assistant City Manager for Human Services to provide a report on teenage violence and prevention efforts in Cambridge; and be it further

ORDERED: That the report, along with this order, be referred to the Public Safety Committee.

In City Council September 10, 2001.
 Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
 Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *D. Margaret Drury*

D. Margaret Drury
 City Clerk

Boston Globe 8/1/01

One in five teen girls abused, study finds

By Kimberly Atkins

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

One in five high school girls has suffered sexual or physical abuse from a boyfriend, according to a study of Massachusetts students being published today by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Teen girls who have been abused by their boyfriends, the study also found, are much more likely to use drugs or alcohol, to have unsafe sex, and to acquire eating disorders.

"We know about the immediate injuries" of physical abuse, said Jay G. Silverman, the lead author of the study and an assistant professor of health and social behavior at the School of Public Health. "But here are risks across many other domains of their health."

The study, which is being published today in the Journal of the American Medical Association,

was based on responses by high school girls to the 1997 and 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Surveys.

Surveys are administered every two years to students in almost every state, but Massachusetts was the only state to include questions regarding abuse in dating relationships beginning in 1997.

The results found that in addition to being more likely to smoke, use cocaine, abuse diet pills and laxatives to lose weight, and have sex without condoms, girls who had been physically or sexually abused by a boyfriend were four to six times as likely to become pregnant as those who had not been abused. And the abused girls were eight to nine times as likely to make a serious suicide attempt.

Although the sample was constructed to be representative of all public high school students in Massachusetts, Silverman said that results are probably represen-

tative of teenage girls nationwide. He also said the study had made no conclusion about differences among racial or ethnic groups.

There are many reasons that teenage girls stay in abusive relationships and act unsafely, said Susan Staples, director of education at the Teen Reach Program of the Salem-based Help for Abused Women and Their Children, which sponsors a program in North Shore middle and high schools that is aimed at preventing teenage dating violence.

"There is pressure on teen girls to have a boyfriend, and they want to keep a boyfriend," Staples said. The desire to stay in a relationship, she said, often makes girls less likely than others to demand that boyfriends use condoms, and more likely to succumb to pressure to use drugs or alcohol.

The problem of teenage dating violence has received increasing attention over the years, prompt-

ing Massachusetts officials to add questions about dating violence to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Prevention efforts must start early to be effective, counselors said. "One of the things we found out is that it is easier to change the attitudes of middle school girls than high school girls," Staples said.

Although the study focuses on responses of girls, researchers and teen health professionals have to focus attention on boys as well.

"This is not young women's behavior we are looking at. This is the behavior of young men," said Harvard's Silverman.

"If we are going to make strides toward reducing and eliminating this problem we need to do much more work to understand the development of this behavior," Silverman said, and "to provide programs to intervene."

Abuse effects

Researchers say that girls who suffer physical and sexual abuse by dating partners are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. (Note: Odds of 2.0 mean a girl is twice as likely to engage in the behavior as one who was not abused.)

Behavior	Odds
Heavy smoking (within 30 days)	2.5
Binge drinking (within 30 days)	1.7
Cocaine use (ever)	3.4
Diet pill use (within 30 days)	3.7
Laxative use and/or vomiting (within 30 days)	3.7
More than three sex partners (within 90 days)	3.3
Pregnancy (ever)	3.9
Considered suicide (within 1 year)	5.7
Attempted suicide (within 1 year)	8.6

SOURCE: Journal of American Medical Association

GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC/JOE YONAN

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MAS

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SOURCE: Journal of American Medical Association

GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC/JOE YONAN

DATA



VOICE

8/2

9:10

MAS

Domestic violence Wed Globe

Cont has inquiry as for a long time
in light of the number

additional report on teenage violence

to be referred to public safety committee



City of Cambridge

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263 CM

Order #10

Report on teenage violence and
prevention efforts in Cambridge.

Councillor Sullivan

In City Council September 10, 2001

ORDER ADOPTED

*Referred to the Public
Safety Committee
sent to C Sullivan
Sept. 14, 2001.*