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New Campaign Urges Bay Area Teens to Get Smart on Dating Violence

Public Service Initiative Aims to Increase Awareness, Prevention Among Teens and Healthcare Providers

SAN FRANCISCO, January 31, 2012 – A new public awareness campaign debuts today in the San Francisco Bay Area to raise awareness of abuse in teen relationships and encourage local youth to get help. Launched to coincide with Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in February, the campaign is a partnership between INOBTR (“I Know Better”), a non-profit organization focused on educating kids through public awareness to keep them safe, and the California Adolescent Health Collaborative (CAHC), a public-private statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that works to increase understanding and support of adolescent health and well-being. The campaign is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Teen dating violence is defined as a pattern of physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally abusive actions committed by a partner to establish control over the other. The abusive behavior may occur in a dating or similarly defined relationship where one or both persons are a minor. According to Liz Claiborne Inc. and Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund), nearly one in three teens who have been in relationships have experienced dating violence or abuse, such as extreme jealousy or insecurity, threatening or humiliating emails or text messages, and isolation from family or friends.

“These numbers are sobering, and far too many teens suffer silently in abusive relationships,” said Melodee Hanes, Acting Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. “Working together, we need to do what is right for America’s children. We are pleased to partner in this effort to spread the word about teen dating violence and, most importantly, help teens know they can stop it.”

The campaign is comprised of educational public service ads that will run on San Francisco MUNI bus lines, BART trains and station platforms, AC Transit buses and at the Westfield San Francisco Center Mall during February. In addition, grassroots materials such as posters and fact sheets will be distributed and are available to local healthcare providers to use as awareness tools. All materials will be available online at www.projectyouthsafety.org.

“INOBT is proud to lead this campaign highlighting an important issue that affects teenagers on a multitude of levels,” said INOBTR Communications Director Kelly McMahon. “What many people do not realize is that abuse goes beyond just physical violence and that it can be controlling behavior that inflicts emotional harm as well. Our goal is to encourage healthy relationships amongst teens and to educate about signs of abuse within relationships. We hope teens who are in abusive relationships will reach out to local resources and seek help immediately.”



Recognizing the important role healthcare providers play in teen dating violence prevention and intervention, the CAHC also worked with Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD, and Futures Without Violence to develop the Healthcare Education, Assessment and Response Tool for Teen Relationships (HEART) Primer, an innovative resource designed to improve the recognition of teen dating violence and provide tools to healthcare providers to address this issue. The Primer was implemented on a pilot basis at the New Generation Health Center and the Alameda High School-Based Health Center. Of the youth who visited the two centers following the implementation of the Primer, almost 80 percent said that it is helpful for healthcare providers to talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships with them. In addition, there was a reported decrease in technological abuse behavior and an increase in awareness of available community resources to help teens avoid or end relationship abuse.

“Teen dating violence is a serious issue, but many young people may be afraid to speak up,” said Sandi Goldstein, MPH, Director of the California Adolescent Health Collaborative. “As our work with the HEART Primer has shown, it is important for healthcare providers at clinics, schools and community health centers to talk to young patients about healthy relationships so they can be more comfortable assessing unhealthy relationships. By targeting both teens and providers, we hope to promote healthy relationships among young people.”

Based on the initial success locally, the Primer will be used at additional school-based health centers. In addition, the Primer is being rolled out nationally and will be revised to be relevant to healthcare providers in all 50 states.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The San Francisco Bay Area campaign is one of six public awareness initiatives addressing child and youth safety issues and is a part of Project Youth Safety, a comprehensive multimedia, multicultural youth safety awareness effort. Other Project Youth Safety campaigns have focused on child abuse, domestic violence and cell phone safety. Additional information on this project is available at www.projectyouthsafety.org.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families. Learn more about OJJDP's programs and resources at www.ojjdp.gov.

The California Adolescent Health Collaborative, a project of the Public Health Institute, is a public-private statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that works to increase understanding and support of adolescent health and well-being in California. For more information, visit www.californiateenhealth.org.

INOBTTR (“I Know Better”) is a non-profit organization that educates broadly through public awareness in effort to keep kids safe. The organization has led numerous awareness efforts, most recently Project Youth Safety, a multimedia child safety initiative. INOBTR can be found online at www.INOBTR.org. ###