

# ATTORNEY GENERAL

## STATE OF MONTANA

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Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
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To the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence:

As Montana's Attorney General and the father of three young children, I want to express my full support and appreciation for your efforts to promote February as National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

We know that sexual violence is often perpetrated by someone the victim knows, and that far too many women and men are affected by intimate partner violence each year.

- One in four women is the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner over the course of her lifetime. The vast majority of these attacks – almost 70 percent – occur before the victim is 25 years old.
- Teens and young adults are especially vulnerable – 70 percent of the women who are raped are under 25 years of age.
- Although boys are victimized at a much lower rate, more than one-quarter of male rape victims were first raped when they were just 10 years old or younger.

Sexual and domestic violence are significant and widespread public health problems. Not only are the acts of violence themselves atrocious, but these crimes take a heavy toll on the victims, the vast majority reporting impacts such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, injury, missing school or work and higher frequencies of headaches, chronic pain and poor physical and mental health.

Because of these serious consequences and the young age at which victimization often begins, we need to ensure that prevention starts early. We should be teaching our kids how to engage in healthy relationships and modeling that behavior.

Law enforcement and other service providers must also coordinate services and offer support for victims who report abuse. It takes courage to report these types of crimes, especially when the victim knows the perpetrator. Victims need to know that, when they report what has happened to them, they will be safe, they will be taken seriously and the offender will be held accountable.

It is our good fortune that Montana is one of 14 states funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent dating and partner violence. The Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence manages this program and, in 2010, released a plan to prevent intimate partner and sexual violence in Montana. Contact the Coalition's prevention team at 406-443-7794 for more information or to become involved.

Victims and their families can visit the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) for help and to locate a program in their area. A listing of domestic and sexual violence crisis programs in Montana is also available at [www.mcadsv.com/Members-all.html](http://www.mcadsv.com/Members-all.html).

During Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, I encourage all Montanans to work toward preventing teen dating violence by supporting their communities' efforts to nurture respect and empower teens to develop healthier relationships. Dating violence can be prevented. As concerned adults, we need to get involved for the sake of our kids and our communities.

Sincerely,



STEVE BULLOCK  
Attorney General

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