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Press Office, Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

New York State Announces Social Media Campaign to Raise Awareness of Teen Dating Abuse

"Dating Abuse is #NotJustPhysical" campaign features local teens, aims to raise awareness that hurtful and controlling language and behavior are red flags in relationships

Campaign coincides with Teen Dating Abuse Awareness Month in New York

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence today unveiled a social media advertising campaign that aims to educate teens that hurtful and cruel words and controlling language and behavior are red flags in dating relationships. The "Teen Dating Abuse is #NotJustPhysical" campaign will run throughout February on Snapchat and Instagram, targeting teens who are 13 through 17 and connecting them with resources, information and help if they are worried about themselves or a friend.

"Young people who are just beginning to navigate the dating world can be faced with great challenges as they grapple with the distinctions between love and jealousy, concern and control," **Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Executive Director Gwen Wright said.** "Our goal is that these messages will help them understand that controlling, possessive behaviors are a form of dating abuse, and that they don't have to take it: Information and help are available."

Ms. Wright discussed the campaign this morning during an event at Columbia High School in Rensselaer County, where she was joined by High School Principal Michael Harkin, students who volunteered to appear in the campaign, and members of the school's Drama Club and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decision-Making). Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today also issued a proclamation marking February as Teen Dating Abuse Awareness Month in New York State. The month is marked nationally as well.

Each of the four social media ads features a teen – appearing distressed, overwhelmed or stunned – being bombarded by abusive and controlling statements: "If I can't have you, no one can," "You're pathetic," "I know where you are," and "You're lucky I love you." The ads illustrate that teen dating abuse can take many forms, but often does not include physical violence. Hurtful, cruel words – either spoken or sent electronically – and controlling behavior can leave emotional scars and verbal abuse can escalate into physical harm.

Columbia High School Principal Michael Harkin said, "It is an honor to have students from Columbia High School participate in this important initiative. As educators, we strive every day to foster a safe and supportive school environment. It is our hope that this campaign will focus more attention to the problem while providing support to teenagers everywhere."

Teens from Columbia, Niskayuna and Shenendehowa high schools, and Gardner-Dickinson School in Wynantskill volunteered to be photographed for the campaign, which features four teens: three girls and a boy. Dating abuse can affect all teens – in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships – but research shows that teen girls are most often targeted.

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence also will launch a social media toolkit available at www.ny.gov/datingabuse on Feb. 1. The toolkit will feature graphics customized for sharing on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and encourage the use of the #NotJustPhysical hashtag. Four posters mirroring the social media ads and Governor Cuomo’s proclamation also will be available to download for distribution.

Ms. Wright also encouraged students to use the toolkit to start a conversation with their peers about the issue and join the national awareness campaign to “Wear Orange 4 Love” on Tuesday, Feb. 13. Teens who participate are encouraged to promote their engagement through social media with the hashtags #orange4love and #NotJustPhysical.

New York State supports and funds community-based programs across New York State to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence and other crimes:

- New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.nyscadv.org
- New York State Office of Victim Services: <https://ovs.ny.gov/locate-program>
- SUNY Sexual Assault and Violence Response Resources: <https://www.suny.edu/violence-response>

The Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (www.opdv.ny.gov) has three primary areas of focus: to advise the Governor and Legislature on policies and practices for the state; to train professionals from all disciplines across the state about the intersection of domestic violence in their daily practice; and to serve as a resource regarding the issue of domestic violence by disseminating regular public awareness campaigns, publishing materials for use by non-profits and victims and highlighting best practices.