



DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES & ADDICTIVE DISEASES

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PRESS RELEASE

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FULTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION WILL HOST AN UPCOMING PRESENTATION ON TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

According to the **American Bar Association**, teen dating violence is widespread throughout the United States, and cuts across race, gender and socio-economic lines. However, a surprising 81% of parents surveyed either believe that teen dating violence is not an issue or admit that they don't know if it is an issue at all!

"If you talk to young people, they are very aware about the violence that occurs when teenagers start dating," according to Dr. Barbara J. Lattimore, Director of the Fulton County Department of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases. "Unfortunately, many adults – most notably the parents – are the ones who are in the dark on this issue," she adds.

The facts reflect Dr. Lattimore's statement. According to statistics published by the American Bar Association, females between the ages of 16 to 24 years old are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other age group. The rate is triple the

national average. Approximately one in five female high school students report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. Half of the reported date rapes occur among teenagers, and 57% of teens know someone who has been physically, sexually, or verbally abusive in a dating relationship. Even more troubling, 77% of female and 67% of male high school students endorse some form of sexual coercion, including unwanted kissing, hugging, genital contact and sexual intercourse. It is also important to note that 50% of youth reporting both dating violence and rape also report attempting suicide.

“With statistics like these, we must get out into the community and alert the public, especially parents, about the dangers that are being experienced by young people during these formative years,” Dr. Lattimore stated.

On Wednesday, May 20, 2009, the Fulton County Department of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases (MH/DD/AD) will host “**Teen Dating and Violence**” at 6:30 PM at the Alpharetta Branch Library.

The presentation will include a description of the issue; information on the prevalence and frequency of dating violence; contributing factors that lead to abuse; warning signs that a teen has been victimized; effective strategies for preventing dating violence; and available community resources. Jennifer Bartl, Behavioral Health Program Manager for the Fulton County Oak Hill Child, Adolescent and Family Center will lead the presentation. Ms. Bartl is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Certified Addiction Counselor. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology, Master’s Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy, and has worked with children and adults in mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family therapy since 1990.

The Alpharetta Branch Library is located at 238 Canton Street in Alpharetta, GA. For more information, please call (404) 730-0248. You also can visit the website of the Fulton County Department of MH/DD/AD at: www.livebetterfulton.org.

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