



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BROOKLYN TEENS RECEIVE A SPECIAL GIFT THIS VALENTINE'S DAY**

*The New York City Healthy Relationship Training Academy is hosting peer education workshops throughout Brooklyn during National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week and Valentine's Week*

During the first two weeks in February, the New York City Healthy Relationship Training Academy will teach young people how to have healthy relationships and how to avoid unhealthy ones. The Academy will hold 18 peer education workshops in three Brooklyn communities reaching approximately 850 young people. The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) partnered to create the New York City Healthy Relationship Training Academy in 2005 to educate young people and service providers about dating violence. In New York City, 11% of high school students report having been hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend/girlfriend in the last year.

"Young people may not know what is happening to them or even recognize that they are potentially in an abusive relationship," said OCDV Commissioner Yolanda B. Jimenez. "The Academy allows young people to have an honest discussion and learn the warning signs of abuse."

"The Healthy Relationship Training Academy supports young people in asserting their right to be respected," said DYCD Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav. "Helping young people understand the characteristics of a healthy relationship and unacceptable behavior is an important step in preventing relationship abuse."

As part of the two week-long training series, teams of peer educators will facilitate 18 workshops for young people at various locations throughout three community districts in Brooklyn, Community Districts 3, 16 and 17, that have some the highest rates of family-related homicides in all of New York City. Participating schools, community organizations, and churches include: Acorn High School for Social Justice, State University of New York Downstate Teens Helping Each Other, Bedford Stuyvesant Preparatory High School, Center for the Urban Environment at Frederick Douglass Academy, Jericho Road, Children's Choice Family Services, EBC High School for Public Safety and Law, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Police Athletic League, and St. John the Baptist Church. Additionally, the New York City Family Justice Center in Brooklyn will host a specialized training session to help adult staff who work at these locations better assist the young participants.

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The workshops teach participants the definitions of family domestic violence and teen dating violence, the inappropriate use of power and control tactics, the components of a healthy relationship, and warning signs of an abusive partner. Throughout the workshop, peer educators highlight real-life experiences and encourage participants to evaluate their own lives to recognize models of both unhealthy and healthy behaviors. The curriculum is inclusive of diverse populations, including teen parents, foreign-born youth, runaway and homeless youth, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender youth. The program also stresses the importance of recognizing the warning signs of a relationship that may become violent, along with the characteristics of a healthy relationship.

### **5 Signs of an Unhealthy Relationship:**

Your Partner...

1. Calls/texts/Instant Messages you constantly and/or checks your email.
2. Embarrasses or insults you in front of others.
3. Acts jealously and does not want you to spend time with others.
4. Consistently criticizes your friends, clothes, or interests.
5. Threatens to commit suicide and/or hurt you if you breakup.

### **5 Signs of a Healthy Relationship:**

Your Partner...

1. Treats you as an equal and respects you.
2. Asks your opinion and is comfortable with you having a different opinion from him/her.
3. Apologizes when he/she is wrong and accepts your apology when you are wrong.
4. Does not feel threatened by your friendships with people of either sex.
5. Encourages you in your goals and dreams.

“Many young people are victims of dating violence,” said Peer Educator Joanna Gomez. “Everyone needs to know that there are safe ways out of dating violence and that being a part of a healthy relationship is everyone's right.”

“Nobody ever teaches you how to have a healthy relationship,” said Peer Educator Keren Sharon. “The most important thing teens have to remember is that they deserve to control their own lives and are strong enough to do so, regardless of what someone else might have said or done.”

The development of the curriculum, originally funded through a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant, was informed by focus groups and by surveying the best practices of peer education dating violence programming. It was further enhanced through feedback from preliminary trial workshops. The finalized curriculum now serves as a national model for dating violence peer education programming. Since its inception, the Academy has provided over 300 workshops to more than 5,000 young people in the five boroughs.

If you or someone you know is a victim of violence, please call 311 or the City's 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-621-HOPE for more information. In an emergency call 911.

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