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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cupid Can Help Schools and Families Promote Healthy Relationships

Des Moines-March 24, 2011-Couples around the state celebrated their relationships this week on Valentine's Day. This holiday is aptly situated in the middle of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. During this month, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence recognizes the negative impacts of dating violence in the lives of youth and the importance of meaningful school based intervention and initiatives as a component of broader violence prevention work.

Dating abuse is a widespread problem; nationally, up to **40% of teens have been in abusive relationships** and of those that have **43% experienced abuse while at school**. Schools must get involved because teens are statistically at a higher risk for intimate partner abuse than adults. If dating violence is ever going to be stopped we must engage with teens where they are most likely to be influenced... at school.

Providing assistance to teens is feasible with the help of school policies. **Senate File 86 has been introduced to the Iowa Senate and would create school policies for addressing teen dating violence**. This bill calls for the Department of Education to distribute model dating violence policy to assist all schools in developing policies for dating violence. Similar legislation and school policies were developed in 19 other states. With the availability of other states' policies as templates and the clear need to ensure the safety of dating teens, passing SF 86 is necessary, feasible, and timely.

With these policies, Iowa has the opportunity to intervene early and teach our young people about healthy, non-abusive relationships. Training school staffs to identify dating violence, respond appropriately, and incorporate anti-violence messages in classroom activities are all simple ways schools can make a difference. Not only can Schools intervene, but they can help teens learn about positive dating relationships worth celebrating on Valentine's Day.

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence believes that addressing teen dating violence is an important step in preventing domestic violence and creating safer communities. The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence seeks to engage all people

in a movement to change the social and political systems that perpetuate violence against women. We do this through education, advocacy and quality victim services. Throughout the month of February, ICADV will continue to share relevant data and information about Domestic Violence in Iowa. For more information please contact ICADV at 515.244.8028

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