

Let's Talk Month 2003

Sample Letters to the Editor for Parents, Teens and Professionals

Professionals

Dear Editor:

Teen pregnancy is a critical issue across the state of Minnesota and in my county, _____. The teen birth rate is _____. The teen pregnancy and birth rate in my _____ community is _____.

_____ will get pregnant at least once before the age of twenty. More than 70% of all teen who become parents drop out of high school.

October is Let's Talk Month. Our children and teens depend on us to talk to them openly, honestly, and respectfully. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other caring adult in a young person's life, educate yourself about what is taught about sexuality in your school, church, and youth group.

As a community, we can support teen pregnancy prevention efforts by working together. Research shows that teens avoid pregnancy when they:

- feel connected to and cared about by their parents;
- have safe and fun places for socializing;
- are provided with comprehensive sexuality education that includes information about both abstinence and contraception

We can support our youth to make decisions that will help them avoid early pregnancy, finish high school, and enjoy happy, fulfilling lives. This month, please take the opportunity to talk to the teens in your life about your values and expectations. Talk to them. Listen to them. Be available to answer all of their questions. If you need help getting started, go to the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting's website at www.moapp.org to start the conversation.

Let's Start Talking!

Parents

Do *you* remember 'the talk'? I remember my father nervously pushed a pamphlet about sex across the kitchen table, mumbling a few words about how I should read it and check back with him with questions.

As a parent of two teens, I know my son and daughter want me to answer their questions truthfully, accurately, and respectfully. Yes, I was nervous to talk to my teens about sex but I knew that if I didn't take responsibility that the information they learned might be

inaccurate. They would not understand my values and expectations. My son and daughter might take chances and make bad decisions.

October is Let's Talk Month. I urge you to talk to your sons as well as your daughters. Boys need to know that teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases happens to them too. As parents, we need to talk to our teens about consequences, responsibility, relationships, and values.

I urge you to educate yourself about what is taught about sexuality in your schools, churches, temples, and youth groups. Our children and teens depend on us to talk to them openly, honestly, and respectfully. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other caring adult in a young person's life, consider their future health.

Talk to them. Listen to them. Be available to answer all of their questions. If you need help getting started, go to the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting's website at www.moapp.org to start the conversation.

Let's Start Talking!

Teens

In kindergarten I learned Stop, Drop and Roll if there's a fire. In first grade I learned to read and write in English and Spanish. In 3rd grade I learned how to spell Mississippi. In 8th grade I learned Algebra. But in 9th grade I didn't learn everything I needed to about sexuality.

I am a young person under the age of twenty-five. Teens today need messages that teach both abstinence as a key method to avert pregnancy and information about contraception.

Fifty percent of all new HIV infections occur among those my age at a rate of two per hour. The United States has the highest teen pregnancy, birth, and one of the highest rates of sexually transmitted diseases in the industrialized world.

"Just say no" is not enough. Information about abstinence is important but not sufficient. Teaching teens about contraception will not cause us to have sex. Only with a complete education can I make informed decisions about my life. That includes all information about sexuality. Trust us with the truth.

Let's Start Talking!