



Support Minors' Access to Confidential Health Care

In Minnesota, a minor's right to access confidential health care is guaranteed. Confidential access to information and services can help reduce risky behaviors, particularly behaviors that can lead to adolescent pregnancy.

Confidentiality is a basic principle, essential in promoting the health of adolescents

- Research shows that adolescents are less likely to access health services without the guarantee of confidentiality.¹
- Less than twenty percent of teens would seek care related to birth control, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or drug abuse if parental notice was mandated²
- Eighty percent of unmarried adolescent females would not seek care if their parents had to be informed.²
- Related research shows that mandatory parental consent laws do not convince adolescents to share their health concerns with their parents, but rather increase health risks to adolescents.^{2,3}
- All professionals are not required to abide by the minors' consent law. It serves as a protection so they can offer confidential health services.

Health care professionals support minor consent

- The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and the Minnesota Public Health Association publicly support a minor's right to consent to their own health care.⁴
- Pediatricians described confidentiality as essential to obtaining necessary and factual information from adolescent patients.⁴

Parental involvement is important

- Fifty-five percent of adolescents discuss their use of reproductive health services with their parents and an even greater number involve their parents in the event of an unplanned pregnancy.⁴
- The minors' consent law does not ignore the value of parent-child communication. In fact, health care professionals help adolescents reconnect and communicate better with parents and adults.¹
- Current law allows health care professionals to inform parents or guardians about a minor's health status in situations in which failure to inform them would jeopardize the health of the minor.

¹ Ford CA & English A. Limiting confidentiality of adolescent health services, what are the risks? [Editorial] *JAMA*. 2002; 288:752-753.

² Council of Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association. Confidential health services for adolescents. *JAMA*. 1993; 269:1420-1424.

³ Reddy DM, Fleming R, Swain C. Effect of mandatory parental notification on adolescent girls' use of sexual health care services. *JAMA*. 2002;288:710-714.

⁴ Adolescent Access to Confidential Health Services, *Advocates for Youth* www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/confhlth.htm.

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