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National and State Statistics Point Towards The Need for More “The Talk” Between Teens and Parents

St. Paul - Recent statistics show that just half of adolescents feel they had one “good talk” about sexuality during the past year with their mothers—and only one third with their fathers.¹ Perhaps more alarming, seventy-two percent (72%) of mothers claim they had talked with their teens about sex while only forty-five percent (45%) of the teens felt their mothers had done so.²

While both the national and Minnesota teen birth rates have fallen for ten consecutive years (nationally: a 26% decline, from 62.1 to 45.9 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 and Minnesota: a 19% decline from 37 to 30 per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19; Minnesota ranks 6th nationally), other national statistics present a compelling case for more attention to parent-teen communication around issues of sexuality:

- 42 percent of teens reported that their first sexual encounter occurred between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.;
- more than half of all sexually experienced teens reported that their first sexual encounter occurred in their family's home (22 percent) or their partner's family home (34 percent)³

Research shows that teens view parents as the most reliable source of information. Unfortunately, they also say that the information comes too late. When young people learn how to make healthy decisions from caring adults who model their values, expectations and share factual information about sexuality, teens are more likely to delay sex.

The Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting (MOAPPP) encourages parents to begin and continue conversations about healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors as part of “*Let’s Talk Month*”.

Each October, MOAPPP coordinates a statewide celebration of “*Let’s Talk Month*” to emphasize parents’ unique opportunity to convey information, as well as share with their children their values, beliefs, and family expectations.

¹ M. Raffaelli, K. Bogenschneider, and M.F. Flood, “Parent-Teen Communication about Sexual

² J. Jaccard and P. Dittus, “Parent-adolescent Communication about Premarital Pregnancy,” *Families in Society*, vol. 74, pp. 329–43.

³ “Facts at a Glance,” *Child Trends*, September 2002. www.childtrends.org

“Parents can and should be partners with schools in providing comprehensive sexuality education to our youth. Students receiving accurate information are more likely to delay sexual activity. **“Let’s Talk Month”** recognizes the importance of parents’ role in this partnership. MOAPPP’s Parent Toolkits can help parents start the conversation and support them as they continue the conversation as their child and teen grows,” said Nancy Nelson, Executive Director of MOAPPP.”

This month, the cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis along with the Hennepin and Ramsey Counties have declared October Let’s Talk Month. Proclamations were issued this week in all four communities encouraging parents to take the time to provide accurate information in talking with their children about their values, expectations and sexual health during *Let’s Talk Month*.

Today, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS), will release a nationwide initiative to increase parent-child communication about sexual health along with the results of a national poll of parents on talking with their children about sex.

To view a copy of the “*Minnesota Let’s Talk Month Parent Toolkit*”, go to www.moappp.org

To view the report, “*Where and When Do Teens Have Sex: It’s Not What You Think*”, go to www.childtrends.org. A complete ranking of the states examining teen birth rates is available at this site.

To view a summary of the SIECUS initiative and poll results, go to www.familiesaretalking.org.

MOAPPP is a professional organization founded in 1991 to strengthen the policies and programs related to adolescent pregnancy, prevention and parenting in Minnesota. MOAPPP is a statewide leader in pregnancy prevention advocacy, information exchange, and awareness among youth, parents, educators, and the general public.