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## MMDHD encourages parents to talk to teens about sex

Stanton~ Most parents dread having “the talk” with their teen. Parents typically aren’t sure where to begin, don’t know what to say or how to say it, and are just downright uncomfortable discussing sex with their child. But just because a conversation is uncomfortable doesn’t mean it shouldn’t take place.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) can’t stress enough how important it is to communicate with teens about sexuality. Parents can help prevent teenage pregnancy through open communication and by providing guidance to their children about sexuality, contraception, and the risks and responsibilities of intimate relationships and pregnancy.

While parents cannot control the decisions their children make about sex, the quality of the relationship between parent and child can make a real difference. Parents are encouraged to Talk Early & Talk Often with their teens about sex and its consequences. Talk Early & Talk Often is a grassroots effort to give parents of middle school students the tools they need to talk to their children about the important issue of sexuality. When given the tools and information, parents can be instrumental in providing critical messages to their children that can help them abstain from sexual intercourse and avoid HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy. For more information on the Talk Early & Talk Often program, visit [www.michigan.gov/miparentresources](http://www.michigan.gov/miparentresources).

Parents are also encouraged to take advantage of existing community resources like MMDHD’s Family Planning Program, which is committed to providing quality, affordable pregnancy prevention services and strives for pregnancy to happen by choice.

“At MMDHD we believe wholeheartedly in the respect, dignity and worth of each individual and commit our agency to work toward the fulfillment of the highest potential in every person,” said Andrea Tabor, Community Health and Education Division Director for MMDHD. “Services provided by our Family Planning Program allow clients to make well-informed choices regarding their reproductive health.”

Mid-Michigan District Health Department’s Family Planning Program is staffed by Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses who provide birth control and education, pregnancy testing, and yearly physicals, as well as confidential and anonymous sexually transmitted infection testing for both males and females. While services are not free, the total charge is based on income.

For more information on MMDHD’s Family Planning program, please visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org) or call 989-224-2195 in Clinton County, 989-875-3681 in Gratiot County and 989-831-5237 in Montcalm County.

*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.*

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