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MMDHD encourages parents to talk to teens about sex

St. Johns~ Most parent 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.

The U.S. continues to have higher rates of teen pregnancy, birth, and abortion than other industrialized nations. That number continues to grow locally as well. From 2002-2006 the teen pregnancy rate increased from 28 to 33 in Clinton County (per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19), while the rate of abortion increased from 5.5 to 7.9 (per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19), reaffirming the fact that proactive measures need to be taken.

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.

Obviously parents cannot control their children’s decisions about sex, but the quality of the relationship between parent and child can make a real difference. Overall closeness between parents and their children, shared activities, parental presence in the home, and parental caring and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of early sex and teen pregnancy. Teens who are close to their parents and feel supported by them are more likely to abstain from sex, wait until they are older to begin having sex, have fewer sexual partners, and use contraception more consistently.

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

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2~ Teen pregnancy

“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.”

MMDHDs Family Planning Program is staffed by Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses who provide birth control and education, pregnancy testing, yearly physicals, and 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 or call 989-227-2195. For information on talking to your teen about sex please visit www.mmdhd.org, choose the “Community Health tab” and search for “Parent Power: What Parents Need to Know and Do to Help Prevent Teen Pregnancy” under “quick links.”

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

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