Teens Really Listen to their Parents

By most measures, teenagers in Minnesota and across the country are doing well. Almost all enjoy good physical health. They have survived early childhood and are decades away from the diseases associated with aging. However, the health of many adolescents is at risk due to:

- Emotional distress
- Cigarette, alcohol & marijuana use
- Early sexual involvement
- Pregnancy
- Thoughts of suicide
- Violence

The Solution: “Making the Connection”

Connections matter. When we look across all groups of kids — rich, middle income, poor, those from single-parent or dual-parent families, those who are Black, White, Asian, Hispanic or American Indian — we have found that a strong sense of connection to family and to parents, and a strong sense of connection to school, protect youth from health risk behaviors.

Surprisingly, things we once thought mattered — school policies, teachers with advanced degrees, private schools — appear unrelated to teens' emotional well-being and health risk behaviors. However, students are at increased risk for unhealthy behaviors when they have been held back a grade, look older than peers, have a low grade point average or work 20 or more hours a week for pay.

The Research: “How Do We Know”

This information is based on Add Health, the largest study ever undertaken of adolescent health in America, mandated by the U.S. Congress in the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993. Some 90,000 students in grade 7-12 answered questionnaires, along with administrators from the 145 participating schools; 20,000 students and 18,000 of their parents completed interviews at home in 1995, an additional 15,000 students completed interviews at home in 1996.

For More Information

If you want to know more about Add Health or issues of significance and concern in the lives of Minnesota teens, contact:

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