

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.<sup>1</sup>
- Less than twenty percent of teens would seek care related to birth control, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or drug abuse if parental notice was mandated<sup>2</sup>
- Eighty percent of unmarried adolescent females would not seek care if their parents had to be informed.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 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.<sup>4</sup>
- Pediatricians described confidentiality as essential to obtaining necessary and factual information from adolescent patients.<sup>4</sup>

### **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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.

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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Adolescent Access to Confidential Health Services, Advocates for Youth [www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/confhlth.htm](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/confhlth.htm).