

training for
leaders



Resources and materials for parent workshop leaders

welcome to ready to talk

Few subjects are tougher for parents to discuss with their kids than sex. Yet few are more important. Teen pregnancy rates, the alarming increase of sexually transmitted disease (STD) infection rates among teens, and the lingering regret teens feel over decisions they've made are harming teens, families, and communities. The good news is that parents really can make a difference. Research shows that, when it comes to making decisions about sex, teens look most to their parents — more than to friends or the media — for guidance. Research done by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy shows that nine out of ten teens think their parents should talk to them about waiting and would find it easier to wait if they could talk to their parents about it.

Yet parents often avoid having this conversation. Many have fears and anxieties about addressing the topic of sex with their children. Some just don't know where to begin. Parents need help and support to overcome these fears and learn the best way to begin and sustain an ongoing conversation with their children.

That's why the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has developed the "Ready to Talk" workshop kit. As part of the Parents Speak Up National Campaign (PSUNC), the workshop is designed to provide resources, tips, hands-on activities, and multimedia components that support parents who want to open up the lines of communication with their teen or pre-teen about sex. (More information about the Parents Speak Up National Campaign can be found at www.4parents.gov.)

The "Ready to Talk" workshop is based on an in-depth understanding of the attitudes, perceptions, practices, and decision-making processes of parents and their teens and pre-teens regarding sexual activity. These insights were gained from focus groups with parents and teens across the country, discussions with organizations in the health, youth, faith-based and education sectors, and a review of relevant literature.

The "Ready to Talk" workshop is designed to:

- Reinforce the importance of having discussions early and often about waiting to have sex.
- Help parents recognize and overcome communication barriers they may have.
- Provide tips, ideas, and hands-on practice at having the conversation.

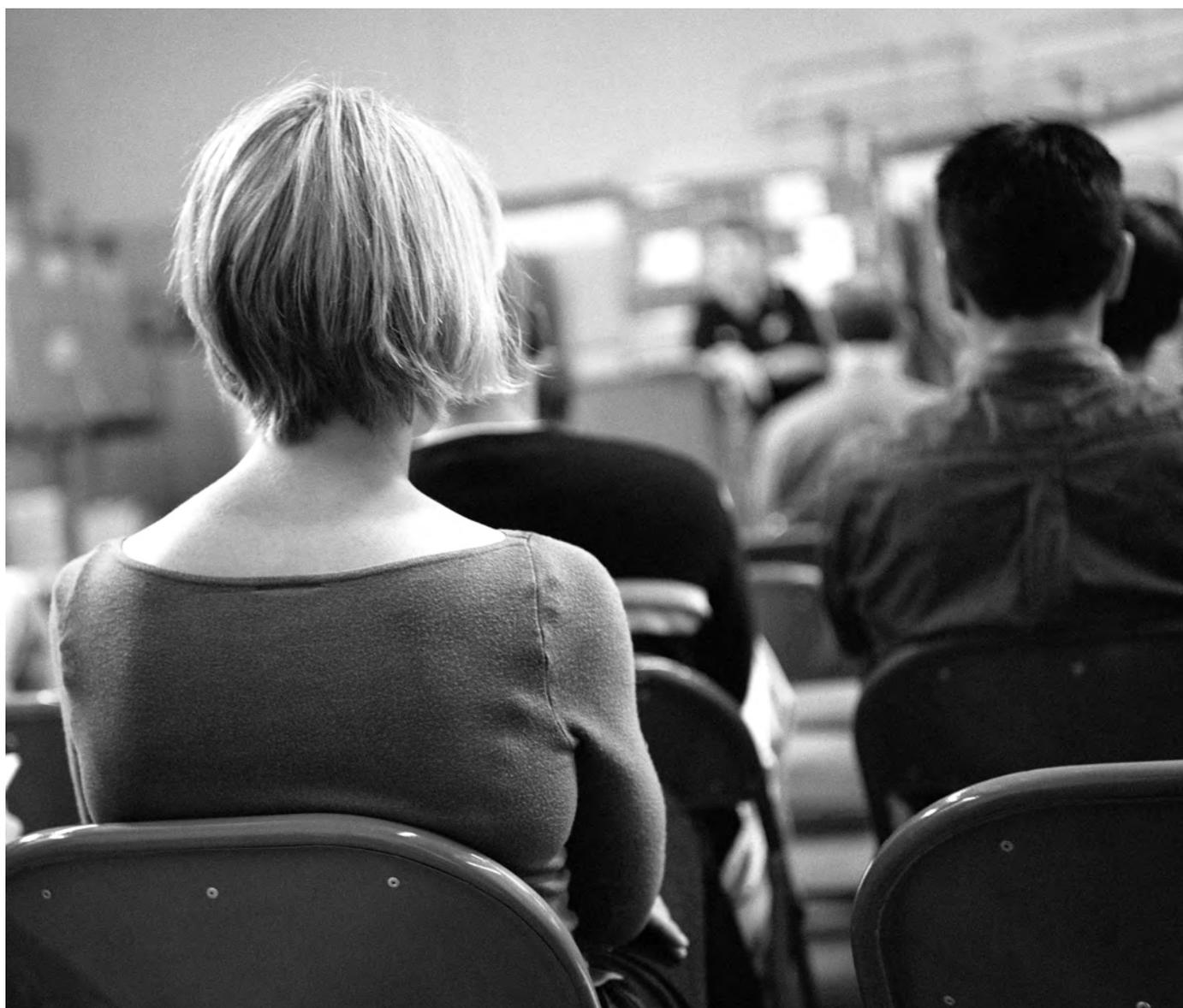
In addition to providing support materials for parents, the kit is designed to support *you*, the facilitator who will be giving the workshop. This kit includes an easy-to-follow Leader Manual with helpful background information about each topic, special instructions for each workshop module and a detailed workshop script that corresponds to the Workshop Presentation. The "Ready to Talk" DVD also includes a segment just for workshop leaders that provides best practices and tips for running a successful workshop.

We know that talking with kids about sex is not easy and that the parents who attend the "Ready to Talk" workshop are likely to have differing values and varying levels of comfort with the subject matter. That's why we have also included ideas for injecting humor, keeping the conversation light, and challenging parents to share and learn from each other in a non-threatening, supportive environment. We want parents to feel comfortable and relaxed during the workshop and leave equipped with the tools and resources they need to talk to their child about waiting to have sex.

Teens and pre-teens in your community are ready to talk. And their parents are ready too. The "Ready to Talk" workshop can help get the conversation started.

table of contents

How to Use Your Kit	1
Workshop Modules	3-20
Module 1	3
Module 2	9
Module 3	14
Module 4	19
Tips for Running an Effective Parent Workshop.....	21
Workshop Invitation.....	22
Appendix.....	23



how to use your kit

Kit Components

The “Ready to Talk” workshop is designed to be flexible and to fit within a 60- to 90-minute time frame. It includes four multimedia components that work together to support you, the workshop leader, and the parents who attend your workshop. All components are also available on the Parents Speak Up National Campaign Web site, www.4parents.gov.

- **“Ready to Talk” DVD including:**

- > *Leader Training Video:* Fifteen-minute video for workshop leaders that supplements the Leader Manual. This video features interviews with experienced facilitators and community leaders who offer suggestions and insights to prepare leaders to host successful workshops. Topics include workshop promotion tips, helpful ice-breakers, overcoming potential workshop challenges and workshop success stories.
- > *Parent Workshop Video:* Fifteen-minute video to show parents during the workshop that will educate them about the importance of talking with their kids about waiting to have sex, the potential barriers they may face, and specific tips and ideas for their own discussions with their children. This video has four segments that correspond to the four workshop modules. The Leader Manual provides information about when to show each segment.

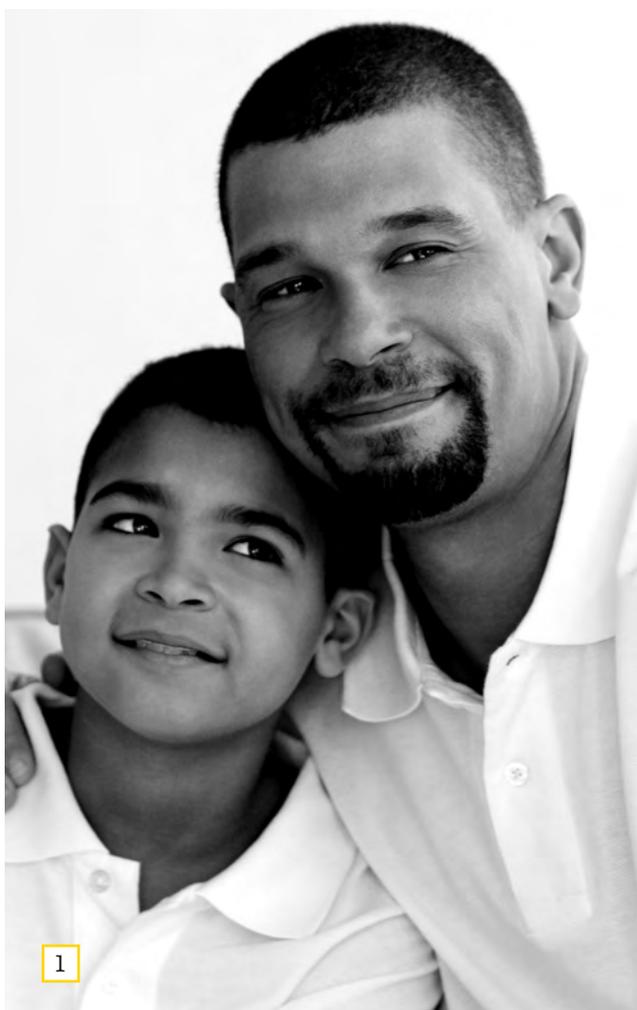
- > *Campaign Advertising:* Examples of the campaign’s TV and radio spots and print ads.

- > *Kit materials:* Electronic files of all materials that you can easily download and reproduce for future workshops and other community leaders.

- **Leader Manual.** This manual includes step-by-step instructions and ideas for facilitating a parent workshop. The workshop includes four engaging modules which are summarized on the following page.

- **Workshop Presentation.** This presentation, to show parents during the workshop, includes twenty-five slides that follow and support the modules and sample script in the Leader Manual.

- **Parent Materials.** Six parent handouts are included to offer parents additional resources and information during the workshop and to take home for future reference. The Leader Manual describes the purpose of each handout and indicates the appropriate times within the workshop modules to distribute each one. If you prefer, all handouts can be distributed to parents at the beginning or conclusion of the workshop.



Workshop Modules

As you review this manual, you will see that the workshop is divided into four modules.

- **Module 1** introduces parents to each other and the topic. It reinforces the importance and urgency of having these conversations with teens and pre-teens and highlights how much children want to talk to their parents about the topic.
- **Module 2** introduces common barriers and fears parents have about discussing sex with their children and allows parents to identify ways to overcome those barriers.
- **Module 3** gives parents specific ideas on how to start and continue the conversation with their children.
- **Module 4** challenges parents to set and meet a personal goal related to the workshop.

Each of the four modules builds on the one before. Consistent elements within each module include:

- Overview
- Suggested Time
- Equipment, Materials and Supplies
- Special Instructions (if appropriate)
- Background information to help the facilitator
- Sample Script

Equipment, Materials and Supplies

- Computer
- DVD player (only necessary if your computer can't play a DVD)
- "Ready to Talk" Workshop Presentation
- "Ready to Talk" DVD
- Enough copies of Parent Handouts 1 through 6 for all parents at the workshop
- Enough copies of Role Play Cards (page 16 of this manual) for each parent to receive one
- Flip chart or chalkboard (optional)

module 1:

are you ready? ready to talk?

Overview:

Module 1 lays the groundwork for a successful workshop. You and the parents will make introductions and share parenting goals with one another, and you will provide parents with information about the PSUNC campaign. To establish a light atmosphere and break down potential barriers, you will start with a quick icebreaker and then set ground rules.

During Module 1 parents will learn how important it is to open up the lines of communication with their children and how much their children want and need to have this conversation with them. You will share statistics about teen pregnancy, STDs, the emotional impact of teen sexual activity, and teens' feelings about their parents' involvement in talking with them about sex. You will also show and discuss the first segment of the "Ready to Talk" DVD.

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Equipment, Materials and Supplies

- Computer
- DVD player (only necessary if your computer can't play a DVD)
- "Ready to Talk" Workshop Presentation
- "Ready to Talk" DVD
- Parent Handout 1: "Did You Know?" (one for each parent)
- Flip chart or chalkboard (optional)

Special Instructions:

- Slide 4 of the Workshop Presentation provides icebreaker ideas. Before the workshop choose the icebreaker you will use. You may want to remove all other icebreaker ideas from the slide.
- At the end of Module 1, give parents copies of **Parent Handout 1**. You will want to make sure you reproduce enough copies for all parents.

Background:

Parents will arrive at the workshop with a personal set of values and beliefs. Some will believe that their children are not ready to have this discussion with them while others will think that they are having the discussion too late. Some parents will agree that the healthiest choice their kids can make is to wait until marriage to have sex; others will believe it is okay for their children to have pre-marital sex, perhaps after high school or as young adults. Wherever these parents are coming from, ease anxieties by assuring parents that everyone's beliefs are valued and welcome. Reinforce that each parent is here to learn something valuable that can be used in his or her own family situation. Ensure that parents will not be judged and that all opinions will be respected. The ground rules on Slide 6 in the Workshop Presentation can help to reinforce this point.

module 1:

Parents will have differing levels of comfort with the subject matter. Some parents will be comfortable talking about this topic with strangers and others will be extremely anxious. The suggested icebreakers (Slide 4) are intended to reduce the anxiety that parents may be feeling, to put everyone on a “level playing field,” and to create a light and open atmosphere. The workshop also helps parents realize they are not alone when it comes to this issue. Once parents know that their peers share the same concerns, they are often more comfortable being open with their own thoughts and values.

While the differences among parents can make your job challenging, luckily, parents who come to the workshop will share certain qualities, too: all have children, all care about their children, and all are at the workshop to learn how to create stronger relationships with, and a happier future for, their children. All parents, regardless of their beliefs or comfort level, want the best for their child, and you should congratulate them for coming to a workshop that can help open up lines of communication and strengthen the relationship between parent and child. Remember, kids say overwhelmingly that their parents have the greatest influence on their decisions about sex.

To help illustrate the physical and emotional risks of sexual activity, we provide many statistics in this module. In some parents’ minds, these statistics will be about “other people.” That’s why it’s important to bring the statistics to life and help parents understand that the statistics and information are directly related to their lives and the lives and futures of their children.



Important statistics include:

- Approximately one in three ninth graders has had sexual intercourse at least once.¹
- The U.S. continues to have the highest teen pregnancy rate in the industrialized world.²
- One out of seven high school students report having had sex with four or more partners.³
- One in four teenage girls nationwide has an STD.⁴
- The younger a teen starts having sex, the greater the risk of pregnancy. Almost half of all girls who have sex before age 15 get pregnant.⁵
- Research shows that teen sex can deflate self-esteem, erode optimism, and spoil the quality of intimate relationships.⁶
- Sixty-six percent of teens who have had sex wish they had waited longer.⁷
- Teens and young adults have the highest STD infection rate in the U.S., with 50 percent of all newly diagnosed STDs.⁸
- Teens rank parents as the number one influence on their sexual decisions.⁹
- Eighty-eight percent of teens say it would be easier to avoid sexual activity if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.¹⁰
- Six out of ten teens say their parents are their role models for healthy, responsible relationships.¹¹

module 1:

You can bring the statistics closer to home by including information specific to your audience or community (e.g., the actual pregnancy rate in your community or the pregnancy rates among Hispanics, African Americans, and/or Caucasians). To find the latest statistics on teen pregnancy, visit www.4parents.gov.



Sample Script:

Have Slide 1 of the Workshop Presentation on the screen as parents arrive.

1. Welcome and introduce yourself to parents, giving a brief overview of your background, the ages of your children (if appropriate), and any story or anecdote that might help to put them at ease. For example, you might share a story about your own conversations, either with your children or with your parents, that illustrates that you're "all in the same boat" when it comes to discussing sensitive topics across generations.

2. Show Slides 2, 3 and 4.

Pause at Slide 4. Have parents introduce themselves and share the ages of their children. As they introduce themselves, have them fill in the blank for the icebreaker statement you have chosen.

The statement you choose will depend on your audience, but all are designed to help break down barriers, reduce anxiety, and put all parents on a similar playing field.

Statements include:

- a. "Raising a teenager is like..."
- b. "Having a discussion with my child about waiting to have sex will probably be..."
- c. "One word that comes to mind when I think about talking to my child about sex is..."
- d. "My hope for my child in ten years is that..."
- e. "One word that describes how I'm feeling right now is..."
- f. "I would describe my discussion with my own parents about sex as..."

module 1:

3. Show Slide 5.

Thank parents for their honesty in the icebreaker, acknowledge that raising kids in today's world is certainly challenging, and congratulate them for being there. Tell them that you'd like to share your goals for today's workshop, which are listed on Slide 5. If there is time, have parents volunteer to share with the group at least one thing that *they* hope to get out of today's workshop. Compile a list of these goals on a blackboard or dry erase board and refer back to them at the end of the workshop to ensure that you have met the goals.

4. Show Slide 6.

Remind parents that while everyone in the room may have their own set of values and beliefs, you are all there because you care about your children and want them to be happy and successful. Tell parents that you'd like to establish some ground rules to help everyone feel comfortable with the discussion. You can have the parents develop their own ground rules (although this can take some time) or you may want to simply share the ground rules on Slide 6.

5. Show Slide 7.

Introduce the Parents Speak Up National Campaign by sharing the information on Slide 7. Reinforce to parents that this national campaign has been designed to help them feel more comfortable and more prepared to talk to their teen or pre-teen about waiting to have sex.

6. Show Slide 8.

Introduce **Video Segment 1: "Are you ready? Ready to talk?"** Tell parents that you are going to show Segment 1 of a four-part video that was developed to help reinforce the points they will be learning today.

Show Segment 1.

Segment 1 ends with a screen shot of the www.4parents.gov graphic; pause the DVD here. Then, ask the following questions:

- a. Which parent or quote from the video really hit home with you, and why?
Parent quotes from the video are outlined below as a reference:
 - i. "I think kids are growing up a little bit faster now than when we grew up."
 - ii. "There's a lot more suggestive material."
 - iii. "If you turn the TV on it's on commercials, it's, I mean, even toothpaste."
- b. Did any of the facts or statistics surprise you? Statistics in the video are outlined below for your reference.
 - i. The U.S. teen pregnancy rate is the highest among the industrialized nations.
 - ii. Nearly half of all new STDs every year occur among teens and young adults.
- c. What do you think your own child would say about having this discussion with you?

module 1:

7. Optional Introductory Exercise.

Now it's time to get to work! At this point in the workshop, you have two options. If you have more than an hour for the workshop, you can go to the **Optional Introductory Exercise**. If you are limited to just one hour, you may want to skip the optional exercise and proceed directly to Section 8 below.

Optional Introductory Exercise: *This exercise is designed to set the stage emotionally for parents. In the exercise, parents imagine and discuss what it would be like to hear from their child that he/she is pregnant, has an STD, or is depressed because of sexual activity. The exercise also allows them to imagine and discuss what it would feel like to know that their child decided not to engage in sexual activity.*

Divide the parents into four groups by having them count off from one to four until all parents have a number. Please note parents do not need to physically move into their groups. Tell parents that they heard in the first part of the video that "kids think they are invincible," but this exercise is designed to show they are not. Ask all parents to close their eyes.

- **Group 1:** *Have parents with number one raise their hands. Ask them to imagine their child walking through the door, asking them to sit down and telling them that they are pregnant or that they have gotten a girl pregnant.*
- **Group 2:** *Have these parents raise their hands. Ask them to imagine their child walking through the door, asking them to sit down and telling them that they have just tested positive for an STD.*
- **Group 3:** *Have these parents raise their hands. Ask them to imagine their child walking through the door, asking them to sit down and telling them that they are feeling depressed because they have had sex and wish they hadn't.*
- **Group 4:** *Have the final group raise their hands. Ask them to imagine their child walking through the door, asking them to sit down, and telling them that they have friends who are having sex but they don't think they're ready.*

What emotions do parents have at the thought of these scenarios? Do they think these conversations are possible? How do they think these situations would impact their children's lives? Acknowledge that parents sitting in the room probably all hope to be in Group 4, and that the likelihood of that can increase by talking, listening, and investing time in their child.

Although these conversations are imaginary, remind parents that conversations like these are going on across the country with families just like theirs.

module 1:



8. Show Slide 9.

The first part of the video shared a few statistics that may have surprised parents. Slide 9 provides several more that shed some light on the issue of sexual activity for teens. Ask parents for reactions. While these statistics may seem like they are about someone else's child, they are based on average children just like theirs.

9. Show Slide 10.

Pregnancy is not the only significant physical and emotional risk associated with sexual activity. Slide 10 focuses on other risks including the high rate of teen STDs and the relationship between depression and sexual activity. Review each fact. Allow time for parents to react to these statistics.

10. Show Slide 11.

Slide 11 reinforces the good news: that teens and pre-teens want to talk with their parents and that parents have the greatest influence on getting their children to wait.

11. Distribute Parent Handout 1, which summarizes these statistics.

module 2:

when parents talk, kids listen

Overview:

In Module 2, parents will learn about the barriers and anxieties that prevent many parents from having conversations with their kids about waiting to have sex. They'll view a humorous list of reasons why parents may avoid the conversation, watch the second part of the "Ready to Talk" DVD and identify strategies for overcoming common barriers and anxieties.

Suggested Time: 20 minutes

Equipment, Materials and Supplies

- Computer
- DVD player (only necessary if your computer can't play a DVD)
- "Ready to Talk" Workshop Presentation
- "Ready to Talk" DVD
- Parent Handout 2: "Common Barriers to Talking" (one for each parent)
- Flip chart, dry erase board or chalkboard (optional)

Special Instructions:

- At the end of Module 2, parents are given **Parent Handout 2**. You will want to make sure you reproduce enough copies for all parents.

Background:

The Parents Speak Up National Campaign spoke with many parents across the country to better understand the feelings they have about talking to their children about waiting to have sex. Parents know they need to provide some guidance on their child's sexual behavior — particularly given the increasing influence of peers and the media — yet, often, they are filled with fears and anxieties that prevent them from having the conversation. Many find it difficult to talk with their children about sex and use a wide variety of rationalizations for avoiding the topic. Some may not even realize that they have anxieties and defenses while others might be hesitant to admit them.

The campaign identified five different "parenting styles" when it comes to conversations with their children about waiting to have sex. While most parents are not exclusively one type and may, at different points, fit several different types, parents will often gravitate towards one style.

In order to help different parents overcome their barriers to talking, it's important to 1) identify the defenses or "excuses" the parent uses, 2) help them understand the underlying feelings they might be experiencing, and 3) demonstrate the positive benefits to talking, which will help parents feel more comfortable talking to their children. The defenses, feelings and benefits of talking for each parenting style are described below.

module 2:

Parent 1

What they say: “But they’re just children!”

What they may be feeling: For many parents, seeing their son or daughter transition into their teen years is like losing their “baby.” Parents sometimes feel that talking about sex will make their child grow up too fast and lead to losing their special parent-child bond.

What they need to know: It’s very common for parents to feel a sense of loss as their child transitions into their teen years and becomes more independent. But talking can actually bring parents closer to their child by keeping the lines of communication open and ensuring that they continue to play an important role in their child’s life as they grow older.

Parent 2

What they say: “Not my kids. I know what they’re thinking.”

What they may be feeling: Many parents struggle with the balance between holding on and letting go of their child as they enter the teen years. Some parents feel that their child isn’t ready to talk about sex; they believe they know what their child is thinking and how he or she is spending his or her time.



What they need to know: It’s not always possible to maintain control, especially in today’s world with all the sex that’s in the media and on the Internet. The best way for parents to influence their child’s sexual attitudes and behavior is to talk to them about avoiding sexual activity.

Parent 3

What they say: “Do I have to talk with them about THAT?”

What they may be feeling: The whole idea of talking about sex makes some parents uncomfortable. After all, it’s a pretty adult and sensitive topic. Parents sometimes feel that bringing up the topic before their child is ready could even put ideas in their head and make them more curious.

What they need to know: Parents can, in fact, encourage their children to wait to have sex without having to use explicit language that might make them feel uncomfortable. Parents can simply share their values about what they believe and want for their child. And by talking, parents can better determine what information their child is ready to hear and discuss. This is the best way to influence their child’s decision to delay sexual activity.

module 2:

Parent 4

What they say: “I’m concerned how my child will view me.”

What they may be feeling: Parents naturally want their children to look up to them and take their advice. Some parents are afraid of looking foolish in front of their children and avoid having the conversation as a result. Many also believe that their children have picked up on their cues and already know how they think and feel about the subject.



What they need to know: Research shows that kids want to know what their parents think and see their parents as their most important role model in developing healthy relationships. All parents have important knowledge and values, and by talking, they can ensure this information is conveyed to their children. Parents can make a difference in their child’s life by talking about waiting to have sex. Even if it doesn’t come out perfectly, their child will respect them for tackling such a difficult subject.

Parent 5

What they say: “What if I can’t answer their questions?”

What they may be feeling: Parents sometimes feel overwhelmed by parenting, especially when it comes to a subject like sex. It seems like such a big job, and they don’t think they know enough. If their child is still in the “sex is yucky” stage, they think it is probably just as well — they feel it’s fine to wait to start talking about it.

What they need to know: Parents need to remember they are the adults and their kids look to them to fulfill their role as a parent. And parents don’t need to be the experts on everything — no parent is. They can make the conversation easier — for the parent and their teen — by giving small pieces of information over time. An

ongoing conversation also gives parents a better idea of what questions they need to address so they can do research, ask professionals, or talk to friends.

In this module, it’s important to help parents realize that barriers and anxieties are quite natural. They can best help their children by recognizing these barriers and finding strategies to overcome them.

module 2:

You will ask parents to work in groups to help imaginary parents overcome barriers to talking with their children about waiting to have sex. As parents are working through this exercise, you may want to suggest that they address the barrier or excuse with a benefit that can help parents see the value of talking with their children.

Be careful not to label the parents in the workshop or lead them to believe that they must label themselves. Parents should, however, understand that it's normal to have barriers and anxieties. The point of this module is to consider what barriers and anxieties they have in order to best help their children. Simply giving advice to imaginary parents, and hearing others do the same, can help parents overcome their own fears.

Sample Script:

1. Now that you have established why it's so important to talk to kids about waiting to have sex, ask parents to list possible reasons why parents would *not* talk to their kids about these issues. List these reasons on the board or chart. It's probably best to keep this discussion general rather than putting anyone on the defensive about why they are not having the conversation.

2. Tell parents that there is a new Top Ten list that David Letterman (or another show) is sure to want to include — the “Top 10 Reasons Parents Don't Talk To Their Kids About Waiting to Have Sex.” *This list is meant to be humorous and to help parents see, in a non-threatening way, some of the barriers they may face.*

3. Show Slide 12 through Slide 15. Read each reason one at a time, starting with number 10. *For fun, you can imitate the Letterman-style of Top 10 lists, with a drum roll for the final answer. Parents will likely find this humorous and should relate to at least one of the reasons on the slide. While this list clearly was meant to be entertaining, many of the reasons are based on true barriers that parents have about talking to their kids about important topics.* At the conclusion of the list, ask parents which reason(s) sounded most “familiar” to them or if they have any to add. Have parents share their thoughts about the list. Then ask parents to note the humor in the reasons given in the video they are about to view.

4. Show Slide 16.

Introduce **Video Segment 2, “When parents talk, kids listen,”** and **Video Segment 3 “What's your parenting style?”** Segment 3 ends with a screen shot of the www.4parents.gov graphic. Pause the DVD here. Then, ask the group for any general thoughts about the video and have them respond to the following questions:

- How many of you have ever used or considered one of these reasons for not talking to your child?
- Which barriers do you think sound like you?
- How can knowing about these barriers help you communicate better with your child?

module 2:

5. Reassure parents that it's completely normal for them to have some fear or anxiety about having these conversations with their kids. What's most important is that when they recognize their own barriers and understand how to overcome them, the barriers won't stand in the way of important, effective, and ongoing communication. Often a barrier can be overcome by focusing on the positive impact of having the discussion.

6. Show Slide 17. This slide says, "My child is only 11 and way too young to have this conversation." Tell parents that this is a common statement that parents make.

- Ask parents what a parent who makes this statement might be feeling. *This parent might be focused on their need to hold on to their child. They may fear they'll lose their child if they talk to their son or daughter about sex.*
- Ask the group what reassurances or positive benefits might help this parent overcome this barrier. Reassuring messages could include, *"Open communication will help to strengthen the bond with your child. If you talk openly and honestly with your children, they will be more likely to keep you involved in their lives. They will also know that you are there for them if and when they have an important question or need advice."*

7. Show Slide 18. Divide parents or have them divide themselves into groups of three or four. With Slide 18 on the screen, review the statements and ask parents if any sound "familiar." Some of these statements relate to the barriers that Dr. Cohen reviewed in the video. Ask each of the groups to choose one of these common reasons that parents often give for not talking with children about these topics. *You may want to encourage groups to select one statement to which they most closely relate or that they are most interested in learning how to overcome.*

8. Have each group imagine that they have been asked to help a parent who feels this way. Challenge groups to come up with benefits that can help "their" parent overcome the barrier. They may want to refer back to the benefits that Dr. Cohen shared in the video. *Suggested benefits are included in the "what you need to know" sections on pages 10-11.*

9. Have each group report back with their suggestions. Encourage other parents to add their own suggestions for each barrier.

10. Distribute Parent Handout 2. Handout 2 is an overview of common barriers to *talking* that parents can take home to learn more about their own barriers.

module 3:

tips for talking

Overview:

In Module 3, parents will learn — from the video, from tips shared in the slides and from each other — specific ideas about how to begin and sustain conversations with their kids about waiting to have sex. They will share their own experiences and role play the conversation with others in the group.

Suggested Time: 20 minutes

Equipment, Materials and Supplies:

- Computer
- DVD player (only necessary if your computer can't play a DVD)
- "Ready to Talk" Workshop Presentation
- "Ready to Talk" DVD
- Role Play Cards (two to three for each parent)
- Parent Handout 3: "10 Tips for Talking" (one for each parent)
- Parent Handout 4: "Good Answers for Tough Questions" (one for each parent)
- Flip chart or chalkboard (optional)

Special Instructions:

- Parents are asked to pair-up and role play an imaginary conversation with their child. To help parents get started, you may want to use the Role Play Cards provided on page 16 of this manual. The cards can be reproduced, cut apart and distributed to parents just before this part of the module. You should have enough cards ready for each parent to receive at least one.
- At the end of the modules, parents are given **Parent Handouts 3** and **4**. You will want to make sure you reproduce enough copies for all parents.

Background:

Parents who have attended similar workshops report that their number one goal is to learn what to say to their kids. Most parents know how important this conversation is, but they are overwhelmed with how to begin. Even if their barriers to talking are overcome and they are motivated to act, they still need help getting the conversation started in a way that will be comfortable for them and their child.

That's why this module is so important.



module 3:

Helpful tips to share with parents are in the video and on the slides that accompany the module. It is also likely that parents can learn from each other's experiences. Encourage them to share their own experiences and discussions with their kids about sex (both successful and unsuccessful).

It's important to recognize that each parent has personal values and beliefs that will drive what they communicate to their child. Some parents will recognize waiting until marriage is a healthy choice; other parents will have different values. It's important to recognize the authenticity of each parent's values and realize that we all share common ground: wanting the best future for our kids. Either way, the two things that ALL parents should communicate to their children are:

- They love them and will always love them.
- They do have values and expectations for their children's behavior, and they include expecting their children to wait to have sex.

Tips for making the conversation easier include:

- There is no need for one big talk. Break the conversation down into "bite-sized pieces." It works best to start with small pieces of information and build on these over time.
- Take advantage of props in the natural environment such as the content of a TV show or the lyrics of a song on the radio as a way to initiate the conversation. Anxiety can be eased if the conversations happen while parents and children are engaged in another activity such as driving in the car, playing catch, or taking a walk.
- Keep the conversation light, even humorous at times, to diminish the seriousness of the conversation and offset the tension parents may feel.
- Ask questions to help understand what your child already knows or thinks. Starting out "asking" rather than "telling" reduces the appearance or feeling of a confrontation.
- Be prepared to share some of your own experiences that are appropriate and comfortable given the situation.

At the end of this module, encourage parents to role play their next conversation with their child. Role Play Cards are provided on the next page to help kick start the process. There are two types of cards. **Conversation Starter** cards include ideas for beginning a conversation with their child, and **Response During Conversation** cards help them practice responding to common statements their child might make during the conversation. Depending on the make-up of the group, you can distribute two to three cards to each parent or have parents choose cards that are most realistic for their situation. Parents can also practice their conversations without the cards.

“ready to talk” role play cards

Reminder:

The cards should be copied and cut apart prior to your workshop. You should have enough cards so that each parent receives two to three different cards. Working in groups, each parent will take a turn reading a card. A **Conversation Starter** will allow parents to practice what they might say in that situation. A **Response During Conversation** gives parents the opportunity to practice how they will deal with difficult responses from their teen and pre-teen.

Conversation Starter Cards:

<p>Conversation Starter: You and your child are watching television and a scene comes on where a teenage boy and girl are kissing.</p>	<p>Conversation Starter: Your child comes home and tells you that a girl in the school is pregnant.</p>
<p>Conversation Starter: You and your child walk by the condoms section at the drug store. S/he giggles.</p>	<p>Conversation Starter: You see an article in the newspaper that says that teen STDs are on the rise.</p>
<p>Conversation Starter: You overhear your child and his/her friends talking about sex.</p>	<p>Conversation Starter: A well-known teenage star gets pregnant.</p>

Response During Conversation Cards:

<p>Response During Conversation: “Yuck. I can’t talk to you about this.”</p>	<p>Response During Conversation: “Everybody at my school has sex. I don’t want to be the only one not having it.”</p>
<p>Response During Conversation: “I don’t want to talk to you about this because you’ll just get mad.”</p>	<p>Response During Conversation: “Do you think I’m that stupid that I’d get (or get a girl) pregnant?”</p>
<p>Response During Conversation: “So, did you wait to have sex?”</p>	<p>Response During Conversation: “Don’t worry. I know how not to get (or not get a girl) pregnant.”</p>

module 3:

Sample Script:

1. Challenge parents to visualize their first (or next) conversation with their child about waiting to have sex. Then ask parents to share one word that comes to mind that describes their visualization. *You could inject humor here by rephrasing the question to ask, "Other than nausea, what's one word that comes to mind when you visualize your next conversation with your child."*

2. Tell parents that this module is all about giving them tools and ideas to have conversations that are both effective and comfortable.

3. Show Slide 19.

Introduce **Video Segment 4: "Tips for talking."** Segment 4 ends with a screen shot of the www.4parents.gov graphic. Pause the DVD here.

4. Show Slide 20.

Remind parents that the two things they should communicate to their children are:

- They love them and will always love them.
- They do have values and expectations for their children's behavior.

5. Given all they've learned, ask parents when they think the ideal age is for them to begin this discussion with their children. *There is no right or wrong answer here. Our discussions with parents suggest that 9 or 10 years old is a good time to start if you haven't already. Whatever the parents in your workshop think, the key takeaway is that open and honest communication will help teens make healthier decisions. 4parents.gov offers the following age-specific tips:*

- **Elementary School Age:** You can talk about love and relationships with a child as young as six. You don't tell a six-year-old the details about sex. But you can tell him or her about affection, love, and treating other people with respect. And you can tell your child why he or she should always expect to be treated with respect. When your child is old enough to ask questions, he or she is old enough to receive simple and correct answers.
- **Middle School Age:** When your child is in middle school you can be very clear with him or her. Tell your pre-teen or teen why it is important to make good decisions about sex. Talk to him or her about setting goals for the future. Talk about feelings, relationships, and waiting to have sex. Talk about why waiting until marriage is a healthy choice and why waiting to have sex fits with your values.
- **High School Age:** When your teen gets into high school, keep talking. During these years, you can get more grown up in what you talk about. Tell them what you think. Ask them what they think. Talk about dating, relationships, values, and self-control. Continue to talk about their goals. Talk about the risks of having sex too young. Make sure your child knows he or she can come to you and talk about anything.

Show Slide 21 through Slide 23.

Slide 21 through Slide 23 presents some ideas for talking to children in elementary, middle and high school.

module 3:

6. Ask parents:

- What advice or tips from the video might help make it easier to begin talking to your child about waiting to have sex?
- Does anything in the video change how you envision your next conversation with your child?

7. Remind parents that the best teachers are often those who have already gone through a similar experience themselves. Ask parents to share any successful (or unsuccessful) stories or tips from their own experiences talking with their kids about sex. It might even help for parents to share how their own parents talked to them about sex.

8. Show Slide 24.

Reinforce the information in the video by sharing Slide 24. This slide gives parents ideas for making the conversation easier and provides specific suggestions about what to say to begin or sustain the conversation.

9. Ask parents to pair up with another parent. Challenge them to role play their next conversation with their child about waiting to have sex. *As the facilitator, you can either have parents come up with their own conversation starters or use the Role Play Cards on page 16. See "special instructions" above.*

10. After parent-pairs have had an opportunity to role play, have them come back together and discuss the exercise. How did they feel about the conversation? Was it easy or challenging? What could help them prepare for the real conversations?

11. **Distribute Parent Handouts 3 and 4.** Both handouts provide parents with helpful advice for making the conversation easier.



module 4:

wrap up and next steps

Overview:

The final module of the workshop gives parents an opportunity to reflect on the content, ask questions, and make a commitment to implement some of what they've learned. Parents will also learn about additional resources that can help them start and sustain this conversation with their child.

Suggested Time: 5 – 10 minutes

Equipment, Materials and Supplies:

- Computer
- "Ready to Talk" Workshop Presentation
- Parent Handout 5: "Hey, I Did It!" (one for each parent)
- Parent Handout 6: "Parent Feedback Sheet" (one for each parent)

Special Instructions:

- At the end of Module 4, parents are asked to complete **Parent Handouts 5 and 6**. You will want to make sure you reproduce enough copies for all parents. You will collect **Handout 6** from parents at the end of the workshop.
- Please mail completed feedback sheets to:

Rosenberg Communications
451 Hungerford Drive
Suite 510
Rockville, MD 20850

Background:

People are often more likely to implement a change when they make a verbal commitment in front of others. You should encourage but not pressure parents to verbalize their personal goal at the end of this module.



Sample Script:

1. Ask parents for final thoughts and reflections on the workshop content. This is a good time for parents to ask final questions, reflect on what they've learned or share information that could be helpful for others.
2. If parents shared their own goals in Module 1, this would also be the time to refer back to those goals and ensure that they have been met. For goals that have not been met, refer parents to www.4parents.gov, if appropriate.
3. **Show Slide 25.**
Share with parents that today is not the end of the assistance that the Parents Speak Up National Campaign has to offer. Show Slide 25, which includes information about the 4parents.gov Web site and additional resources they can find there.
4. Distribute the "Hey I Did It!" goal-setting card (**Parent Handout 5**). Challenge each parent to set and write a goal on the card that relates to something they've learned at the workshop. Encourage them to be as specific as possible. For example, "I will talk to my son" is not as specific as, "I will talk to my son this week and make sure he understands my values and expectations with regard to sex."
5. Encourage volunteers to verbally share the goals they've written.
6. Finally, distribute and ask parents to complete the "Parent Feedback Sheet" (**Parent Handout 6**) about their experience at the workshop today. Collect completed sheets from parents as they leave. Thank parents for coming and congratulate them for taking this important step toward helping their child successfully navigate some of the most challenging parts of adolescence and young adulthood!

tips for running an effective parent workshop

Below are some tips and best practices to help parents get the most from the “Ready to Talk” workshop. Please watch the “Leader Training” DVD segment for additional insights from experienced workshop leaders for running an effective workshop.

- 1.** Review all materials a couple of times before conducting the workshop. Inside this manual, you will find an easy-to-follow workshop guide that gives you background information and talking points for each of the four modules. You can also visit www.4parents.gov for additional information, tips and ideas.
- 2.** Consider your audience. The workshop is flexible enough to tailor the content to the unique needs of your group. For example, if they all know each other, you can skip the introductions in Module 1. If they are not comfortable with the role play, you may want to model one example for them.
- 3.** Consider your group size. If you have a particularly large group, you may want to break them into smaller groups for most activities.
- 4.** If you don’t have a built-in audience, you may need to promote the workshop to get parents to attend. The most effective way to do this is to partner with an existing group that has programs for parents of teens or pre-teens. If you can conduct the workshop at a regular meeting, you will have a captive audience. You can also try to encourage attendance through hard copy and electronic invitations, group newsletters, list-servs or by placing an ad in a local newspaper. Included on page 22 of this manual is a sample invitation to the “Ready to Talk” workshop that can be used or tailored to meet your needs.
- 5.** Time can be a challenge for many workshops, and the parents who attend your workshop may want to spend a lot of time sharing their own stories and learning from each other. Try to keep track of time so you can get through the entire workshop.
- 6.** Parents who attend may be walking in with anxieties about the subject matter. You can create a light atmosphere from the beginning by playing music as people enter, introducing yourself to each parent and encouraging discussions among parents.
- 7.** Use humor throughout the workshop. Humor is an extremely effective way to make people comfortable, reduce anxieties and make a serious subject less intimidating.
- 8.** Put everyone on the same playing field immediately. Some parents may feel like they are the “only ones” who don’t know how to talk to their kids. Acknowledge that they are probably feeling anxious, share your own stories, and commend people who are open and honest about their feelings.
- 9.** Establish ground rules early in the workshop so parents feel comfortable sharing their opinions. Parents will have different opinions about when to talk to kids and what to say so it is important that parents are respectful of all opinions, including those that are different from their own.

10. Help parents understand that there are many successful ways to approach the conversation rather than one “cookie cutter” discussion. The workshop is designed to help them talk to their kids in an effective and comfortable way for *them*.
11. Allow for abundant interaction among the parents. If time is running over, you may have to table a particular conversation, but remember that parents will likely learn the most from each other. It's important that parents have a chance to be heard about what they think, what they want to know and what they've learned.
12. Encourage parents to relate the workshop content to their own lives. As parents realize that the statistics and other information are really about them, the workshop will become more useful for them.
13. Allow for reflection time. Reflection is the key to learning. Parents can reflect simply by thinking about what they've learned or by talking about it with others in the group.
14. Don't allow one very vocal person to control the conversation.
15. Have fun and don't feel like you have to be the expert! The more fun you have with the workshop content, the more enjoyable the experience will be for all. If you don't know the answer to a question, put it out to the group for help or advice, or direct the parents to www.4parents.gov.

Sample Parent invitation:

you're
invited

Your kids are ready to talk. Are you?

Research shows that teens look first to their parents for guidance when it comes to making decisions about sex, but many parents feel uncomfortable or unprepared to have this conversation.

If you are ready to have the conversation but are struggling with what to say and when to say it, the “Ready to Talk” workshop is for you. This workshop was developed by the Parents Speak Up National Campaign to provide parents of teens and pre-teens with ideas, tips and interactive exercises to help them feel comfortable and confident to talk to their kids. The Parents Speak Up National Campaign is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Topics covered include:

- Why your kids really want and need to talk to you.
- The common reasons parents don't talk to their kids about sex.
- How to overcome your anxieties about talking.
- Practical tips on how to talk to your teen.
- Where to go for additional information.

Get Ready to Talk!

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

RSVP information _____

appendix

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2005: Surveillance Summaries," *MMWR* 2006;55 (No. SS-5).
- 2 The Guttmacher Institute. U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics, National and State Trends by Race and Ethnicity. New York: The Guttmacher Institute, 2006.
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance- United States, 2005: Surveillance Summaries," *MMWR* 2006;55 (No. SS-5).
- 4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, 2006 Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007.
- 5 Suellentrop, Katherine and Christine Flanigan. Pregnancy Among Sexually Experienced Teens. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002.
- 6 Hallfors, Denise D., et al. "Which Comes First in Adolescents — Sex and Drugs or Depression?" American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 29, 3 (2005): 163–170.
- 7 Albert, Bill. America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy: An Annual Survey. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2007.
- 8 Weinstock, Hillard, Stuart Berman, and Willard Cates, Jr. "Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among American Youth: Incidence and Prevalence Estimates, 2000." Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health 36.1 (2004): 6-10.
- 9 Albert, Bill. With One Voice: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy: An Annual Survey. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004.
- 10 Albert, Bill. America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy: An Annual Survey. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004.
- 11 Albert, Bill. America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy. An Annual Survey. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2003.





Parents Speak Up
NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

www.4parents.gov