

# TEEN TALK: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

## EVALUATION SUMMARY

### What is Teen Talk?

Each fact sheet is one page, double-sided, and includes research-based, practical information for parents on talking with their teen about challenging topics. For this project, 34 schools across 6 states were able to distribute the five fact sheet *School Issues* series, which addresses: school success, bullying, employment, sports and competition, and peer pressure - and the five fact sheet *Youth Choices* series, which addresses: alcohol use, tobacco use, marijuana use, parties, and dating. Parents also completed a pre- and post-test evaluation. ([www.parenting.umn.edu/programs/familiesWithTeens/teenTalk/index.htm](http://www.parenting.umn.edu/programs/familiesWithTeens/teenTalk/index.htm))

### Why Use Fact Sheets?

Parents reinforced past research which has found newsletters and fact sheets to be an effective method of providing parents with parenting information.

- Nearly three quarters of parents (73%) reported that they read a book, pamphlet, or newsletter related to parenting other than *Teen Talk*.
- Parents reported using this type of parenting information more than parenting classes, lectures or seminars about parenting, and speaking with a counselor or therapist about parenting, combined.
- The only source of parenting information that more parents reported using was talking with family and/or friends.

### Readership

Creating and distributing helpful and relevant information is important, but not if that information goes unread.

- **Most Parents Read the Fact Sheets:** Approximately 75% of parents who received the fact sheets reported reading them. This clearly indicates that the content was important to parents.
- **Many Parents Shared the Fact Sheets:** In addition, many of the fact sheets were read by someone other than the parent – parents valued the information and wanted to pass it on. Many parents shared them with their spouse, friends, relatives, and their teens. For example, 120 parents read the fact sheet entitled, “There’s a party, can I go?” Beyond those parents who read the fact sheet, 32 spouses, 26 teens, 5 relatives, and 3 friends also read the fact sheet for a total of 186 readers. On average, each fact sheet had 1.5 readers. With such high use, distributing 4086 fact sheets allowed us to reach 6129 caregivers and teens.
- **Parents Put It Into Practice:** Overall, in nearly 25% of families, a teenager was a reader of the fact sheets. Parents were not only learning communication skills from the content but were implementing these new skills by using the fact sheets to start conversations.

### FAST FACTS

#### ABOUT

#### PARTICIPANTS

(N=368):

- *The majority of respondents were mothers (83%)*
- *Most participants (96%) described themselves as white (non-Hispanic)*
- *19% reported their child received free or reduced school lunch*
- *73% lived in rural areas*
- *16% lived in urban areas*

#### Why do parents like Fact sheets?

1. They provide relevant and useful information.
2. Parents can easily fit them into their busy schedules.
3. Parents are free to implement relevant information according to their own parenting style.
4. Fact sheets provide a conversation piece for parents to share with friends, relatives, and teens.

## MORE KNOWLEDGE AND LESS WORRY

In the pre- and post-tests, parents responded to a series of questions on parenting practices. Interesting findings emerged:

- Parents reported that they knew more of the parents' of their teen's friends after reading the fact sheets than before reading them.
- Parents reported that they were less worried and less frustrated as a parent after reading the fact sheets than before. This suggests that parents' worry and frustration can be lowered with relevant information presented in written form.

## START TALKING

Some of the most important outcomes were found in the area of parents' communication with their teens. Of specific interest were parents who had little or no communication with their teen on important topics before receiving the fact sheets.

- Of parents who had not talked with their teen in the past month about their sexual values before reading the *Teen Talk* fact sheet, 14% of them did communicate with their teen about sexual values after reading the fact sheet.
- Of parents who had not talked with their teen in the past month about the risks of drinking alcohol before reading the *Teen Talk* fact sheet, 14% of them did communicate with their teen about the risks of drinking alcohol after reading the fact sheet. Furthermore, of parents who had only talked once with their teen in the past month about the risks of drinking alcohol before reading the *Teen Talk* fact sheets, 16% increased their communication with their teen about the risks of drinking alcohol after reading the *Teen Talk* fact sheet.

## PARENTS' RESPONSE

What stands out in these data is that parents are responsive to fact sheets on many levels. They are gaining information to better communicate with their teen, they are gaining skills that allow them to increase their communication with their teen, and they are feeling supported in their parenting role which leads to feeling less worried and less frustrated as a parent. These data provide strong evidence that fact sheets are a low cost way to effectively disseminate research-based educational materials to large numbers of hard to reach families.

## QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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