

NWX-OS-OGC-RKVL

**Moderator: Tish Hall
September 15, 2011
1:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by.

At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the question-and-answer sessions, please press star, 1 on your touchtone phone.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

And now I'll turn today's meeting over to Tish Hall. Thank you, you may begin.

Tish Hall: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of (OEH), we thank you for taking the time out of your busy afternoons to participate in this wonderful Webinar. We're glad that you were able to join us. Today, we're going to talk about teen pregnancy and child bearing, and the power of partnerships with parents. I really hope that you'll find this information to be helpful and can help you to supplement the things that are going on currently in your programs.

If you have any questions or concerns, we will have an opportunity at the very end of the presentation to take calls - take questions. You will notice that right now we're in a listen-only mode so you won't be able to ask verbal questions. But at the very end of the presentation, you will be able to ask your audio questions.

Also at the top of your screen, you will see a Q&A button. If you click there, you'll also be able to type in questions which we will also field at the end of the presentation.

If you would like to print the documents - I don't see the print function on my screen, but you may be able to see the top of your screen. We also will send those documents out to you as soon as possible from our (OEH) List Serve. Also, it will be recorded and a transcript will also be provided for the Webinar that will be placed on the (OEH) Web site.

Okay, so today we're in for a treat. We are listening to Teen Pregnancy and Child Bearing: The Power of Partnerships with Parents, and we are lucky to have today's speaker, Barb Flis, Founder of the Parent Action for Healthy Kids. Barbara - excuse me, Barb has more than 15 years of experience working with parents, schools, and community organizations in the arena of HIV and sexuality education. She has advanced training and experience in effective professional development for adult learners.

Barb has provided training and technical assistance to sex education trainers in every corner of the State of Michigan. She is a nationally recognized expert, keynote speaking at conferences and professional work with in-school health, teen pregnancy prevention, education professionals, and parent education.

Her work coordinating the former Michigan Governor's Talk Early and Talk Often parent program has been cited in national press, including Newsweek. In 2010, Barb was one of ten participants invited to Washington, D.C., to provide input in the development of the parent Web site component for the First Lady's Let's Move initiative.

Let's take this opportunity to listen up and invite Barb to share her expertise and her knowledge with us about parenting.

Barb Flis: Thanks so much Tish. I appreciate this opportunity, and I know that this is a really busy month for everyone. So for you to take the time - an hour out of your busy schedule to hear about parents, I am humbled by the opportunity.

So we only do have less than an hour because we're going to allow about 10 to 15 minutes at the end for questions. And so very simply, what we are going to cover today is to identify what parents need to know about adolescent sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention programming, look at effective ways and ineffective ways that we communicate with parents, and then I'll be describing some innovative ways that communities and schools can more effectively engage parents as partners.

I think before I go any further, it's important for you to know number one that I come to this work as a parent. I now have young adult children, but I was very involved in their health education, not knowing quite what I was getting into. But once I got into it, I realized that there was a disconnect - both people providing education and those parents who wanted the best for their kids, there was a disconnect. And so I worked to build that bridge between providers and parents.

Also I think it's important when I say the term parents, I am referring to not only a mom or a dad, or also an aunt, an uncle, a grandparent, perhaps a foster care parent, or anyone who is considered the caregiver of a child or of an adolescent.

And please forgive me if I do say the word sex education too much. I know this is about teen pregnancy prevention, and I tend to unintentionally kind of you know use one word, but I'm actually talking about what we're doing here today, and that's teen pregnancy prevention.

So with that being said, we are going to define parent engagement and see how you see it, and we're going to start off with a quick poll of how you define parent engagement. Do you see it as a frustrating experience, a win/win experience, or something in between?

Okay, so the results that I'm showing are - and they're still coming in.

Okay, well this is a really pleasant response to this poll that 52% of you see it as a win/win situation, 39% see it as something in between, and 7% see it as frustrating. So I think if anybody has tried to work with parents, at times you are going to have some frustrating experience. I really would love this to be a two way conversation, because I'd like to hear more stories about what the win/win is, or maybe you see it in the end that if it's done well, it can be a win/win. And definitely, it can be a win/win for us.

A lot of things when I ask providers what troubles them about parents, I hear that parents don't talk to their kids. They don't come to meetings or workshops that we might provide. They may come to them, but then they don't come back. If I send things home with their kids in the form of an activity, I don't get a response from them. I also hear that parents are in denial

about what's going on with their kids. I may also hear - and I don't hear this quite as often, but a lot of people will say if we teach them about pregnancy prevention, it will encourage them to be sexually active.

I'm not hearing that - when I'm working with parents, I'm not hearing that much from parents, but I am hearing it from providers because they are - they do have that perception that that is how parents feel.

So there is one little kind of gap that - or bridge that we need to kind of connect and really get to the heart of what's going on with parents and why we seem to have some challenges with parents.

I want to present to you that we may have an idea in our head about what a perfect parent is, and that would be a parent who would do good parenting at home, talk to their kids about sexuality and teen pregnancy prevention. Come to anything that we're offering so that they can understand what is being provided to their child in the - or their adolescent in the form of instruction.

But when we hold that standard of how we think a parent - a perfect parent is, we really want to recognize that that's an illusion that we're holding in our head. And the challenge with holding that illusion in our head is that when the parent presents themselves and they're not what we hold in our head as the perfect parent, then we're disappointed. And the only thing that we've really lost is the illusion of who we think they should be.

And this is important to remember. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have expectations of parents; however, it's really important to meet parents where they're at and get rid of that idea of where we want them to be, find out where they're at, and set ourselves mini-goals of where we think we can take them so a success is a success no matter how small.

So a success is not necessarily taking a parent who we might say is at a 1 and moving them to a 10. We have to be able to recognize the success if we move them from 1 to 2, because every time we set ourselves up for something bigger, we become disappointed and then it affects the work that we want to do with parents.

So I'd like to reframe our perception of parents a little bit and just do a little math. If I had you all in a conference room with me and we were doing this as a - in a workshop style, I would have ten of you stand up at the front of the room and then I would ask you to step forward. Like for example California, 82% of parents in California support sex education. This is in school. So, I would have 1 of the 10 of you step forward. It's a really good visual for us to understand that we need to focus our energy on the parents who are willing to work with us.

Very often, we spend a lot of time with the small group of parents who are networked in the direction that we want to go for the - for our adolescents to make healthy decisions. So there is support out there. We have 78% support in Michigan, 89% in Minnesota, and 91% in North Carolina, and more and more states are doing parent surveys. This is a really good way to really frame in your mind that there is support and really encourage you to move forward.

So I'd like to do another poll, because it's going to help me to know - and help you prioritize your work. So what do you want parents to do? Do you want them to - this would be like your - what you really want them to do. Do you want them to talk to their adolescents about sex? Do you want them to come to workshops and educate themselves about adolescent sexuality? Do you want them to know what is taught in the program that you're doing so they can continue the conversation at home and support your work? Or, do you just

want them to really -- and I don't mean this with any malice -- do you want them to stay out of your business so that you can do your programs and teach them with fidelity?

Okay, so we had a little switching up there after you thought about it awhile.

And I'm just watching it change here a little bit.

Okay. I think we're - it hasn't changed that much here in the next - last second or so. So it looks like 81% of you would like to know - like them to know what is taught in the program so that they can continue the conversation at home and support your work. And then 12% of you wanted them to come to workshops and educate themselves about adolescent sexuality. 3% want parents to talk to their adolescents about sex, and 3% want you to - want them to stay out of your business. So thank you for your honesty on that.

Now Tish or (Melissa), could we - is it possible to go back to that - thank you.

Thank you. So I want to help you reorder this, okay. And the reason I want you to reorder it, because this is how we've had in Michigan, success with parents. If we reorder it this way, and this is my thinking in reordering it.

If we do the come to workshops and educate themselves about sexuality first, okay - okay, that's Step Number 1 in working with parents because they don't know often what they don't know, and so we want to build a foundation. So getting them to come to workshops and educate themselves about adolescent sexuality is - to me is Step Number 1. It's building a foundation, and we'll talk a little bit more about that throughout the Webinar.

And then the second piece of business - order of business to me is the one you voted the most on, is to know what is taught in the program so that they can continue the conversation at home and support your work.

And then the third one would be - would - to me would flow naturally after the first and the second, and that would be they would be more prepared and more comfortable to talk to their adolescent about sex. I really would like to totally eliminate the stay out of business only because you know, it would be okay if you could do that, but it really is - leads to potential conflict, okay.

The beauty to me of doing - educating them first about adolescent sexuality then knowing what you're teaching, and then talking to their adolescents about sex, you could have a fourth step after that which would be parent-to-parent education, which is just like you know working with adolescents; peer-to-peer education is so powerful, it's no different with parents.

If parents are equipped with the knowledge and skills and they start talking to other parents, to me that vision for the future is very exciting with parents. So, I just wanted you to think about that and how we might reorder that.

Okay. So we can get out of that poll slide. Thank you.

Okay, so this kind of frames it for us as we go into that working with parents and are parents listening, but also reminding you that listening is a two way street.

So I use this quote from (Neil Postman). He wrote several wonderful books, but this one is from The End of Education. And he says in there, "For people in distress will sometimes prefer a problem that is familiar to a solution that is not." Now I want to present this to you in two ways. First of all if you talk

about it in terms of teen pregnancy, we can talk about the problem, and certainly the general public has no problem talking about that problem and talking about it. But, we don't often - we're not too familiar with the solution. So I want to suggest to you that it's important that we start talking more about the solutions than we do about the problems.

In the area of parenting, a parent's end on teen pregnancy prevention, there is also a perception out there that parents are a problem in that they don't support our work in teen pregnancy prevention. And this I want to say is really a dangerous path to follow, because number one, as I showed you the percentages of parents that support sex ed in schools, that is not true. And if you continue to look at parents as a problem in your work, then it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, okay.

So what we want to do with parents is to take away the mystery of teen pregnancy prevention, okay. So when we're thinking about parents, it's very important to understand, and I don't know - if this was more interactive, I would ask you to raise your hands. But of the people that are on the call, I would guess that a majority of you are parents. So if you are, put on your parent hat right now and ask yourself how often have you felt as a parent inadequate? Shamed? Judged? Frustrated? Or just as a big loser as a parent?

These are parent emotions, and it's important for us to understand that parents have these emotions. And so if they don't know a lot about the work we're doing, if they don't know a lot about sexuality education or adolescent sexuality, they may be hesitant to come to a program. If they do come, how we approach them is going to be so important.

It's very important to do more parent-to-parent work rather than provider with knowledge imposing that knowledge and information on the parent. That is

not going to - if we do it that way, it's not going to help us in making the parents that are there feel more comfortable. Parents value authenticity. Let me just say that again because it's a very important piece. Parents value authenticity. So the more authentic you can be with a parent and meet them where they're at, the better the lines of communication will be.

Also sometimes it would help if we checked our language. This is three words that I continually work on, and I call the right side partnership language and the left side is language that kind of distances us from parents. We may say to a parent, "You need to do that - this," but I would suggest that you try to say, "You may want to do this." "You have to do this," or you could say, "You may choose to do this.

Nobody likes to be told what they should do, and if you think about those parent emotions that I just put up there, you know it's really kind of a slippery slope when you start telling parents what they should do. Rather, we can say you would like - maybe you would like to do this.

You can see that the language on the right is more a partnership language because you can say you may want to do this, and whether they go home and do it or not, it doesn't matter whether you said need to or want to. The fact of the matter is, is you have no power over what they do. And when you say you need to do this, you're acting more as an authority rather than a partner.

So if maybe you took one thing away from this today and you're working with parents is looking at your language around this, and think about it in terms of a partnership language.

So it's really important to remember parent's language and the language we use with them. It's important to keep in mind their emotions. It's important to

clarify our conversations. So often, a parent may say something and we can have a conversation in our head and go off on a rabbit trail and assume that we think we know what they mean. And in fact, you really don't know what they mean until you sit down and ask them some more open-ended questions to find out exactly where their thinking is coming from.

This example comes to me when we talk about abstinence. A parent may say, "I want my child to have - I want abstinence to be a part of the program." And we - it's really important to talk more about what that term means to them. Does it mean that they want them to always receive abstinence-only education, or does it mean that they want them to get the message of abstinence, but you at - may - some point, it's they are okay with the fact that you're going to talk about risk reduction strategies.

Now I am not going to tell you - I don't tell parents what they should think. I like to give them a foundation of what we know -- and you're all working with evidence-based programs so that's important -- and then, let them clarify what they mean. And the only way to clarify what a parent is thinking is to sit down and have a conversation.

It's also important to keep things simple. Very often if we get five parents to come to something, we get so excited. We think we have to tell them everything that we could possibly tell them because we don't know when we're going to get five parents back again. And that is probably the worst mistake we can make, because less is more, and it's really important to remember that less is more.

Have one simple objective for when you bring parents together and meet that objective, and you want to hook them in a way where they learn something they can personalize it, and they will come back for more.

So I'm going to move on, and I hope you've written down some questions for the end on this first part, because I'd be - I'm so happy to answer anything. It's a little challenging to talk and not field questions as we go along.

So now I want to move into Sex Education for Parents 101 and helping parents to be good consumers of your program. So this is the piece when I did that poll and I said the first thing would be if they came to a workshop and we could educate them about adolescent sexuality. This is what I do. You know you - I'm not saying this is the end-all and be-all; I'm just trying to give you an example of how I walk parents through this so that I can build a foundation for them, okay. So here we go.

This is the first thing I do with them, and I would like to ask you - and we'll do a poll - and this is not the poll, but we'll get the right one up. There we go. Did your parents do a good job talking to you about sex? So vote right now if you can they did a great job, average, or not at all.

Okay. So we have 67% of you on the call said that your parents didn't talk to you at all, 26% of you said that they did an average job, and 7% of you said they did a great job. So I am going to guess that the 7% of you that said they did a great job, if you have children, you probably are very comfortable or at least comfortable talking to your kids about sex and teen pregnancy prevention. But you can by 66% of you who are in the business of adolescent health had parents who didn't do a good job talking to you about sex.

This is what I find when I bring a group of parents together. If I have 25 parents in a room, I might have one or two that said their parents did a good job, okay. So with that in mind, it speaks to the fact that we have to do some 101 foundation building, and then also it helps other parents in the room to

see, “Hey, we are all in the same boat and we’re all struggling with this, but we can support each other and move forward.”

So one of the 101 pieces that I do is why is quality sex education important? And this - there’s some of these that are good, but there are some that are pretty significant, and I will tell you this first one is significant. I say to parents, because we are all sexual beings and - this is something that really - you know, people - it just doesn’t occur to them. And I will say we’re all sexual beings from the time we’re born until the time we die.

And if you look at our life as a pie, it is not the biggest slice of our pie, but it is a significant slice of the pie. And if we ignore that and we don’t pay attention to that, particularly with our adolescents, we’re really doing them a disservice because they will learn about their sexuality from other places and not from the people that we want them to, which would be their home, their community, their school, their place of worship.

So really important to recognize that we are all sexual beings, including our children; that it can be a positive or a negative force in our lives, and if we are talking to our kids and if we are providing them with a good education in this area, it will be - more than likely be a positive force in their life. We know that there’s a lot of health risks associated with that.

And while I’m on this point about HIV and STDs, because I may - I don’t think it will come up later, I also want to say that I am not - we do not use scare tactics with our students when we’re educating them. And, there’s good evidence-based reasons why that doesn’t work, and it is the same with parents. So I present HIV and STD and unintended pregnancy numbers and stats in a very - I don’t want to say nonchalant, but not in any way the sky is falling, okay. Just in a very realistic way.

There's a lot of health, social, and economic costs that are often significant, and then our young people are overwhelmed with conflicting and powerful messages about sexuality. And this would be the bullet point where I would say that we have research that shows that parents do make a difference. Parents really feel that they cannot make a difference with the overwhelming messages that kids get in the media, but we can make a difference.

Then the next point is a real key piece, and this is where you can tie it to the programs that you're providing - the evidence-based programs that you're providing. Young people need facts and skills to make healthy decisions. It's the combo of facts and skills that - and we'll talk about this a little bit later in the slide.

But I will say to parents, remember this because we're going to talk about this; sex education is going to happen with or without adult guidance. A large percentage of you said your parents did not do a good job talking to you about sex, and yet you figured it out. Do you want that to be the same for your child, or would you like them to have some of your guidance in that? We want our kids to grow up to be sexually healthy and responsible adults, and they are going to be parents or mentors one day.

Then this is another slide that I put up, and I am no - in no way saying you know, you have to use this from (unintelligible), although I just find this one of the most valuable documents that I've ever used. It's key concepts from (unintelligible) from birth through 12th grade. But the reason I put this up is to bring to people's attention, and I will say to parents these are key concepts of sexuality education.

Now if I was at the 7-Eleven getting a cup of coffee and somebody asked me what I did for a living and I told them I did teen pregnancy prevention, which of these key concepts do you think would come first to their mind? And it would be behaviors, okay.

So what's important for us to do in our work with parents is two things; to help them to understand it's not that our teen pregnancy prevention programs are not all about behaviors, that there are other important key concepts in the work that we do. And I can tell you the one that parents really - the one key concept that really resonates with parents is the relationship piece, okay. They want their kids to understand about a healthy relationship.

And indecently when I recently did a focus group of students, they too said, "Tell us what a healthy relationship looks like." So these pieces - and if I were you, I would talk about key concepts, and then I would connect them to the program that you're doing and show how you are addressing each of those key concepts.

The other piece that this book from (unintelligible) does is it breaks down each of those key concepts into topics, and then it gives developmentally appropriate messages for the age of the adolescent or the child. This is an important for piece for parents to understand, because especially when I'm working with parents in the area of puberty, the fourth and fifth grade parents, they get so nervous because they think we're going to be talking about all behaviors. And so it's important to help them understand that they're building blocks, and there's developmental messages for each grade level or age that the child or the adolescent is at. So this is really key for you to communicate to your parents, and it can help you to connect it to the program that you're doing.

Also, you will want to let parents know what's going on with students - with our adolescents. I said students. I should've just put adolescent needs up there. But, these are just examples of some of the data that I pull. I will pull youth risk behavior numbers. I - we've done student focus groups here in Michigan. I tell them what students are saying at - HIV and STD rates, and then teen pregnancy rates. So any kind of data that you can use is helpful.

You just want to be careful about how you share data with parents. You know, they don't need tons of numbers, just some key numbers. And then always just tie it back to the instruction that you're doing and why you are focusing on that particular instruction, because you want to address this need for students.

So this was where - when I said to you we want to remember facts and skills. This is to me one of the most important pieces for parents to understand and then eventually to connect with what you're doing with your program is that knowledge alone does not change behavior.

We may give our kids the knowledge about teen pregnancy prevention. They may have the intention of not engaging in sexual behavior, but their intention does not always match their behavior, okay, and I use smoking as an example here. You can - and I will say that with parents. You can drive by a hospital and people who work for the hospital know the dangers of smoking, and yet you will see them at the side of the building having a cigarette. So we know that knowledge alone does not change behavior.

So what's important I believe for you to point out to them is what does it take for our kids to move from intention to actual behavior? And so this is where the knowledge is important, facts to make responsible decisions, and understand the risks and the benefits. They also need the self-efficacy, the beliefs that they can use the skills to change their life. They also need

environmental support, somewhat consistent messages from home, school, and community to reinforce the behaviors, but then they need the ability to act in a healthy way.

So if your evidence-based program has communication skills, refusal skills, negotiation skills; this is the example that you would use.

You could take and break these into parent workshops. You can tie them to the skills that you're doing, actually have them participate in one of your activities from your program. You could do several workshops for parents on helping their kids with the self-efficacy piece. It is a really tough time for our secondary students - for our adolescents. They're questioning who they are. You could help parents with the whole adolescent development piece there.

They need to separate from their parents. They need - they're testing all the time about who they are. And for helping parents to understand why their adolescent behaves the way they do would be so valuable to parents, okay.

So another piece that I bring into that to tell them why the skill-based instruction is so important is looking at the adolescent brain. Parents love this piece on the adolescent brain because it helps them to understand that kids are working off the emotional part of their brain, and the place in their brain where they're making decisions is not fully developed and it doesn't get fully developed, that pre-frontal cortex, until they're about 21 or 22, and later in males.

So when we tell them not to do something, they intend on not doing it, but then they go off and do it anyway. This is why we have to have them practice over and over and over again so that we have a better chance that they do the behavior rather than just have the intention.

And I reference a lot the adolescent brain. You could download that on the National Campaign Web site, and there's a lot of stuff out there on the adolescent brain. But you don't have to get complex with parents. In fact, it would be better if you didn't. Just basically helping them understand.

They have such a sense of relief when we talk about the adolescent brain because they think that they're a bad parent. And if you go back to those parent emotions of, "I feel like a loser. I just can't win this. I'm ready to throw the towel in with this kid." Okay, so that's an important piece to remember.

And then this learning pyramid. You're working with evidence-based programs, so I think in order to reinforce what you're doing to help parents understand that just lecturing is not going to - they're not going to retain as much if you're lecturing. And you can see when you work - hold a discussion group, which I would assume within your programs with your adolescents there's discussion groups, there's a 50% retention. Practice by doing is a 75% retention.

And then - and this is so frustrating to me because I see in evidence-based programs the peer-to-peer piece is probably the most powerful. And a lot of what I see when I'm working with providers is that there's not enough time and this is the piece they drop. And yet, that's where the retention happens the most.

So everything that we're saying works in the classroom, it's also going to work with parents. So if you do these same things that you do with students that you do with parents, get them into groups, let them talk, and then eventually they can be parent champions and they can go off and talk to other parents, and then we have a dynamic that is very, very powerful.

It's also important when you're building a foundation with parents to talk about the importance and why we teach with fidelity. And I compare this to baking. If you're going to take a couple of ingredients out of your recipe for making a cake, and that cake looks really delicious right about now at 2:39 in the afternoon. I would like a piece.

But if we take out some of the ingredients, we're not going to have the same cake. So if there is some discomfort about something you're doing in the program, if you talk about this right off the bat and you have covered the other areas, they will see why removing one lesson that they might be uncomfortable with is probably - you're not - it's not going to come out the same. So, I think this warrants bringing up.

Also, these are standard goals for a successful program that I've put out. And I want to tell you I've not had one parent stand up and go like, "I don't agree with that."

We all want our kids to have accurate information. We want them - we want to promote a positive sexual identity. We want them to increase their communication with trusted adults. We want to give them skills so that they have positive relationships. We want to foster healthy behaviors. And, we want to prevent sexual behaviors that are going to result in negative consequences like an unplanned pregnancy, an unhealthy relationship, or an infection with HIV or STDs.

Now each of these things - you know, you could have parents talk about these things. There's just - you know, the possibilities of things that you can do with parents in mini-sessions are kind of endless really.

So engaging parents now as partners. These are all just from my work of what I've learned over the last 15 years of working with parents in the area of teen pregnancy prevention, and that is that any program that we're going to do for youth is going to be effective if it's not supported and reinforced by parents.

And I want to tell you the power of it being reinforced with parents is - can be really fabulous. I will give you one example. I was working with a school district who - in Michigan, we have to have 50% parents on our Advisory Boards when we implement programs, so the parents really wanted - after they approved programs for school, they wanted to do something for the parents, and we did a Talk Early, Talk Often.

After those parents understood what happens in instruction for kids to make healthy decisions, they were behind it 100%. They wanted a program for parents. They did the Talk Early, Talk Often, and they had 68 parents come to their program. When parents are on something and on board with something, they will get other parents on board. So that's the beauty of having it supported by parents.

Research is showing that young people want - need messages from their parents, even though they may sound and look resistant to hearing it from parents. And that - I'm going to take you back to that's why it's important for parents to understand what's going on with an adolescent. They may act like they don't want to hear it, but we want to help parents know that they have to plow through and talk to their kids anyway.

This is - the third bullet point is really - has been an annoying for me in that parents are often an afterthought in program planning rather than an integral part of the program design and implementation. So I think many of you are just getting started with your programs, and I would challenge you by saying

if you could seek out some parents now and get them involved in your planning right now, it would be very beneficial.

It's going to slow your planning down a little bit absolutely, because you're going to have to backtrack and explain some things to them. Somebody might have to buddy up with that parent to give them kind of the information that will be helpful to them as you move through, but it will pay off in the end.

Very often, we work very hard at planning something. We don't involve parents in the planning part. We do the workshops and things for parents and nobody shows, and then we've used a lot of our energy and we're upset that nobody's come.

So - and then I have to tell you that the educators and providers attitudes towards parents I have to say has been the biggest barrier in reaching them. So I hope that I have at least today convinced you that parents really do support what you're doing, and if you can have that vision in your mind, you'll be breaking down some barriers and reaching them.

What we found in Michigan to be very helpful is a local parent survey to find out what parents want for their kids and at what grade levels. What we have done in local communities and in our local schools here in Michigan has supported what we knew from our parent statewide survey, that parents really do support it.

And I want to tell you most parents think that we're teaching teen pregnancy prevention more than we are. They want more in programming than we're often able to provide because of scheduling and time and funding. So, these are some of the things that we learned by doing a parent survey.

I will also use this as an example, and I'm sorry to keep speaking about schools, but this is a great example of how parents want to get involved. We had a school district who did a parent survey, and at the bottom of the parent survey they said, "If you are interested in serving on our committee, please let us know." They had 87 parents say they wanted to serve on a committee. 87. 87.

We had to go through them and kind of sort them, and so we had parents you know with all different ages and we had males and we had females, and you know we - and special ed and foster care, and we wanted to make sure everybody was represented. But 87. It was incredible, and that's an incredible committee to be working with right now.

So some tips. If you could view parents as a blessing rather than a burden. I think I already talked about this, that less is more. If - you know, just focus on one objective when you bring parents together and just try to meet that objective.

If you're giving them some information, something in printed form, make sure that in the time you're with them that you actually use that document you're giving them. Because I'm going to tell you if you hand stuff out and you kill a lot of trees, it's probably going to go home and it's not going to get read. So you have to show them what's in it and offer them a hook.

Ask parents for what you need. If you're looking for some champions or you're looking for parents to do something, put out little - put out an ask, and don't make the tasks too big or too overwhelming, and then follow-up with parents.

Building relationships with parents takes time, but it is all about the relationships. It's important to have open and honest dialog with parents. As I said before, they value authenticity.

It is okay to respectfully disagree with parents. We don't always have to agree on everything, but it is important that we respect parents. When - if we're not respecting them, we're really not respecting the child I guess is what I'd like to say on that.

And parents are looking for expertise and leadership. And when I say the word leadership, yes we need people to say, "We believe in this program. It's evidence-based. Let's have this ongoing conversation. We'll build a relationship together." But when I say leadership, you have to let the person know that you're competent in what you're doing and that it's okay for them to get on board because you will lead them in a good direction for their kids.

This is the program that I did for the Governor. We're still doing it today. It's Talk Early, Talk Often. It is not available outside of our state. I will be sure and let everybody know when it is. I'm not talking about this program for you to want to have it. I want to tell you that there are a lot of good parenting programs out there. I just want to tell you that the lessons that we learned from this program.

It's a two hour program, and most of the two hours is spent with parents talking to each other and practicing situations and how they would respond to their kids. We found that they're thirsty for this information and they appreciated the parent-to-parent style of the workshop. My facilitators talked to parents - my facilitators are parents and they talked to parents parent-to-parent, not as somebody with some authority talking down to them. It is totally parent-to-parent.

Parents appreciated the respect we showed for their value system and honoring them as the primary educator because we just had them practice answering situations and not telling them what they should say. We just provided them with the skill of how to keep the door open to conversation.

And in that practice which we call a roll play, we discovered that that was the first conversation that parents often had on the topic. Now - you know so, here's how a conversation can go. We could say, "Can you believe that's the first conversation they ever had on the topic?" Okay, that's a little shame-based and judging parents.

Rather, I look at that as saying, "Okay. This is good information to know. This is the first conversation that they ever had, so this gives me information on what we have to do." Okay. It shows us where our work is, okay. But if we can stay away from, "I can't believe it. They're not talking to them." That's judging and shaming, and that's not getting us anyplace.

Parents came to our workshop feeling powerless over their adolescent's outside influences, so - and that is really the truth. They feel like, "Oh, my gosh. I just can't make a difference." So nurturing parents and motivating them is a really big piece of this.

Some of our challenges were in participation. And as I said, when providers and - community providers and schools and hospitals offered this program as hosts, the participation of parents was lower. But when parents were the host, we had high participation. So again, I want to speak to the value of getting parents on board - a couple of parents on board and then letting them loose to get other parents.

Other challenges were attitudes towards parents and sensitivity to the topic. There's just some people in the community that just don't want to put on a marquee, "Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workshop Today," or "Sex Education Workshop for Parents." It's just the sensitivity of the topic. Fear of conflict.

And then, I have to tell you that it's a little bit of an afterthought, parent programming. But if we really have a person on it who's dedicated to it, and you advertise it well, and you look at the calendar and you pick times that are really going to be useful, you're further ahead in really getting parents to attend.

So I'm going to go quickly now. No shaming. No judging and blaming. Be positive. Use simple language. Be sensitive towards differences. Have fun. We always make sure that we laugh with parents because it breaks the emotion and the fear and the tenseness in the room. And listening is probably the biggest piece. Really important to have a time in your workshop where parents can talk with each other and connect.

So we have ten minutes for questions.

Coordinator: All right. Thank you. At this time for questions, press star, 1. Please unmute your line and record your name to be introduced.

Again for questions, press star, 1. If you'd like to withdraw the request at any time, you may press star, 2.

Thank you. One moment for your first question.

Thank you. Our first question comes from (Jennifer Baker). Your line is open, and state your agency please.

(Jennifer Baker): The State of Alaska.

So, how do you suggest we engage the parents of youths that are in juvenile justice or mental health facilities where parents are not very available and some youths are in State's custody?

Barb Flis: That is a great question, and that is - would be the hardest group to reach. And I guess I want to put it back to you - I think with that group, I would do a lot of nurturing. I would even go - I would back up from the 101 and just do some dialog with them

A good example would be - I think I might start with - if you - can you have an audience with them? Let me just say that first. Do you have an - if they're incarcerated or - the parents - you're talking about the parents are incarcerated or the kids are in juvenile justice?

(Jennifer Baker): The kids are incarcerated.

Barb Flis: Kids are incarcerated.

(Jennifer Baker): Or in mental health facilities or (unintelligible)...

Barb Flis: Or in mental health facilities. So there is some mandate is there not for parents to participate in some things? Are the parents mandated by court to participate in some things?

(Jennifer Baker): They can be. It depends on you know, each individual youth's...

Barb Flis: Okay.

(Jennifer Baker): ...care plan. But assumingly when these education opportunities are happening, the youth's are in facility and no one else is really allowed in the building.

Barb Flis: Yes. Okay.

(Jennifer Baker): Just the youths that are there and the peers that are teaching them.

Barb Flis: Okay. Well, this is probably the toughest situation of ever - ever, and I guess there's one really dicey question on the table, and that is - and you would have to make that determination too. Would we really want some of these parents engaging with their kids? I mean depending on the situation of the kids, if they can't - because I work with foster care too, and a lot of these kids came from very dysfunctional, abusive homes.

So I guess I want to say, and I know the funders are on the phone, but I think you want to be careful about how you use your energy in that way. And is it to the best advantage of the kids? Now I know that's probably a horrific thing to say, but you really have to look at every situation and see where you want to put your time.

Now if - in working with those parents, I think the first thing I would do is just pull them all together and - it wouldn't be a focus group, but I would do a focus group style where you're just asking them a couple of questions and letting them do a lot of talking so that you can get a sense of where they come from - where they came from in the area of sex education. What are they thinking in terms of what they want for their kids?

Because until you kind of know where they're at, it's going to be hard to know where to start in directing them to having a healthy conversation. Does that make sense at all Alaska?

(Jennifer Baker): It does. It's definitely a challenge. And you know, part of the education that we're working with is including homework assignments where youths have to go - that not us, but the curriculum requires youths to go home and discuss with their parents what they think about the topics that we discuss.

Barb Flis: Yes. And see I guess - you know, I'm just speaking for Barb Flis, parent action for healthy kids. I am not reflecting you know, Federal Government or (unintelligible) or anybody. I just have to say that you know, (curriculas) are not - you know, they're not one size fits all, and in some places you know, I'm seeing that there has to be adjustments.

I said the focus group thing because this is so interesting. Under a grant that I received, we did six focus groups around the state on adolescent sexuality with parents. And what was funny about it is I just asked you know like four questions and then I listened, because that's what a focus group is supposed to be. But yet when the parents did the evaluation, they said, "We have to have more workshops like this."

See, they talked so much amongst themselves that they had built a support system, and they saw that they weren't in it alone. They saw that they shared a lot of the same issues and challenges, and that they had a lot of the same issues in their lives. And, they actually felt like we did them a service, and I didn't do anything except record what they said.

So, there's a lot of value in bringing people together in a nurturing environment, kind of seeding them and asking them some questions and then

letting them talk and just making it a trusting environment for them to talk.
I'm kind of at a loss other than that's the most basic place I can think for you
to start with them.

And the you know, it would be so interesting to ask - you know, say - because
they have the answer. You could ask them, "How do I reach other parents like
you? You are presented with a lot of challenges. And tell me, how can we
help you?" They're not used to hearing that. They're usually used to the - to
people doing things - programs for their kids or people in authority telling
them what they need to do. But you might ask them, "What can we - how can
you help me? How can we reach other parents?" That's my best answer.

(Jennifer Baker): Thank you very much.

Barb Flis: Yes.

Coordinator: Thank you. Our next question, (Christopher Johnson). Your line is open, and
state your agency.

(Christopher Johnson): Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge.

Barb Flis: Okay. Go ahead.

(Christopher Johnson): Actually, you already answered my question.

Barb Flis: I did?

(Christopher Johnson): Though I do want to go ahead and ask another questions. Can we
get a copy of the PowerPoint? That was awesome.

Tish Hall: Yes.

Barb Flis: I think they're releasing it. Yes.

Tish Hall: Yes. We will be releasing the PowerPoint within the next couple weeks and putting it up on our Web site as well as we'll send out a copy of the PowerPoint to all of the agencies that (OEH) funds and (ACYS).

(Christopher Johnson): Okay. Thank you so much.

Tish Hall: You're welcome.

We actually have a couple questions from the online Q&A.

Barb Flis: Yes?

Tish Hall: The first one is from (Paula Mooney-McCoy), and she says that, "We are a Tier II program and have a parent curriculum that is a part of our program. How can we have parents play a part in designing the program if our organization has to submit the curriculum ahead of time and has to stick to that for the course of the evaluation?"

Specifically (Paula), that would have to go through your Project Officer for (OEH), and I would suggest that you make an appointment to talk to them regarding that and any adaptations that may be made to that parent curriculum.

Barb Flis: And can I also - can I add something there then Tish?

Tish Hall: Yes.

Barb Flis: You know, you can have a program for parents that's you know standard, and it's great if you involve parents to make some changes to it. But even if you just involve parents with your whole initiative just to let them know how it was funded, what your goals are, having them look at the curricula, asking them how do you think we can get parent - even that basic stuff alone without having to cause you more work to alter the parent program; although, I would love to see that parent program. But without having to alter that, you know that would be miles ahead right there, just getting them on board with you with the work that you're doing.

Tish Hall: Okay.

We also have another question for you Barb from (Kevin Feldman). And his question is, "What is the methods for getting parents to sign consent forms for educating their kids?"

Barb Flis: Passive consent where they don't - you know, if they don't return it they're in. It's hard because I know what we're doing is so important, but if you just take the hat off that you have on right now, and if you're a parent you put it on and you think about the number of things that come home, stuff just gets overlooked and it doesn't - don't take it personally. It doesn't mean that they don't love you and they don't care about you.

And sometimes, you have to look at - I would be so curious to see the wording in what is going home. It's good to run something by - like that by a parent saying, "Does this make sense to you?" Or, is it what I used to call when we were really involved in school - the parents, we would call it edu-speak. Is it in your language or is it in parent language?

So you know, I think the wording of the letter is important. If it's loaded with - you know, we love bullet points as parents. You know, send me something home that has a bullet point, where do I sign and what do I do? So you want to make it as easy as possible to send back. So if you have the funding to give them a - to mail it and give them a self-addressed stamped envelope to send it back, that's going to up it.

But you know, it's they're busy and they might not understand what the letter says. I guess those are the two things. And I have not seen a letter in front of me, but it has to be very - I'm not speaking that we have to dummy down to parents, but just something simple. They're not in our business, so our language does not always resonate with them.

Tish Hall: Okay.

We have a couple more questions from online, and the next question is from (Stefian Williams), and her question is, "Could you provide an example of a parent survey and what was the role of the Parent Committee? Also, what were the demographics for the participating in Talk Early, Talk Often?"

Barb Flis: Okay, I'm not sure I'm going to remember all those questions.

Tish Hall: Okay, well the first one is about a parent survey.

Barb Flis: Yes. The parent survey I would be happy to - actually, it's on the Michigan Department of Education Web site, but I'd be happy to send that to you Tish.

Tish Hall: Okay.

Barb Flis: And you can forward it to them.

Tish Hall: We could get it out.

Barb Flis: Yes. We've just had great luck with that, so that - I'd be happy to share that with you.

What was the other question?

Tish Hall: The next question was what was the role of the Parent Committee?

Barb Flis: Oh, okay. So in Michigan if we're going to implement sex ed in schools, we have to have a committee with clergy, educators, student health professional, and for each of those four people, we need 50% parents. So if we have those four people, we need four parents, okay. So that was the committee that I was referring to where we had 50% parents and they review materials and methods, and then they would make a recommendation to the School Board about what's going to be taught.

So we have very prescriptive - some prescriptive laws in Michigan about the process for implementing pregnancy prevention programs in schools. So these parents were on that committee.

So by being on that committee and actually in the - some of this foundation stuff that I showed you today, that's exactly what I did with the committee so that they really understood what this is about and how knowledge and skills equates to behavior change. They were on board. They wanted to update everything.

And then, they wanted a parent program because the parent - the student focus group said that, "Our parents aren't talking to us." So they said let's get a

parent program going, and then they just sent fliers out every place. They took it over and we got 68 parents.

The Middle School Principal called me that night because we cap that program usually at 30 parents, because it's a skill-based program and we want to make sure they're practicing the skill. And he said, "I'm begging you. Let me - don't let me turn any parents down. We will help you with this." And, we had 68 parents on a Michigan snowy night. Does that answer her question? What was the other question?

Tish Hall: The last piece was the demographics of the parents that participated in Talk Early, Talk Often.

Barb Flis: I don't have that off the top of my head, but we've presented in every corner of our state, so...

Tish Hall: Okay.

Barb Flis: Our oldest - I know like offhand, I know like our oldest participant was 80-some years old, and then our youngest was like a teen parent.

Tish Hall: Okay.

Barb Flis: And then, we also do grandparents, and I'm doing a foster care workshop in another month. So...

Tish Hall: Okay.

Our next question is from (Janey Leary), and she asks, "What advice could you give us with regards to designing informational material for parents about

teen pregnancy prevention research study for which parent consent had been waived?”

Barb Flis: So do I understand this? They’re doing a research study?

Tish Hall: Yes. They’re doing a teen pregnancy prevention research study and parent consent for the program has been waived. So they’re providing information to the parents. How would you - or what advice could you give for them to provide information to the parents that you haven’t asked active consent for?

Barb Flis: I don’t think I’d be afraid of that. I think I would just break it down to the benefits of the outcome of this, what this is going to mean for our kids in the - you know, and then just sell it that way.

It’s kind of hard with it not being a known.

Tish Hall: Yes.

Barb Flis: I can cite one quick example. Here yesterday in Michigan, our Governor is - it’s voluntary for physicians to enter in height and weight to calculate BMI for kids, so I know that some parents are going to complain that, “I don’t want that information entered into a State database for my kids.” So I’m just framing something for parents to say you know, “We - you know, we have an obesity issue, but we don’t know at young ages where we are. Where’s the highest need? You know, we have to prioritize how we’re going to help our young people and this is surveillance so this is important.”

So, you're always going to have somebody that’s not going to agree with you, but I think if you learn to frame things in a way of how it’s going to benefit not only their child but adolescents as a whole and what - how valuable it’s

going to be to the community, I think you're going to have you know, overwhelmingly support for it, and then you'll just have a fraction who aren't going to read it. So...

Tish Hall: Okay.

Barb Flis: But - yes. I mean, that's the truth. I mean, you just - you know, you don't get everybody.

Tish Hall: Okay.

Our next question is from (Jackie) from (Sasha Bruce), which is implementing the teen outreach program. And her question is their program requires active consent and they're having a tough time getting the active consent. What else could they do besides surveys?

Barb Flis: Well, a survey wouldn't - yes, a survey wouldn't be active consent. A survey would tell you that there's support. If you're required to have active consent, I don't know. You're going to just have to get creative. I don't know if you're going to have to get on the phone, find a parent to help you. Offer credits for your adolescents who are in the program to get it.

Tish Hall: And (Jackie), I would encourage you to have this discussion with your Project Officer as well as the replication center, the Wyman Center for TOP to see if they have any suggestions of getting active consent more easily accepted in your community.

Barb Flis: Yes. I mean, I love the idea of active consent because it really respects the parent you know, in their role, but I also understand the challenges. I understand the challenges.

Tish Hall: Okay.

Last question, and I cannot see the entire question, so I'm hoping that it's going to work out. Since Talk Now, Talk Often is not available to other states at this point, do you have any suggestions for a curriculum to research or present to school districts or community organizations?

Barb Flis: Yes. I would look within your own community and see what parenting programs are available. I feel so bad about this, because we're talking about releasing this, but it's not going to happen this year. But it's just so simple folks. It's bringing parents together. It's bringing a little bit of awareness. I mean, you could do this. It's bringing a little bit of awareness to them about where we are with adolescent sexual health. You know, what's going on with our adolescents.

And then, just helping them to - what - you know, what a good conversation looks like between a parent and an adolescent. And we do a little role play, and then we give them some questions and we let them practice. And then we process it just like you would do in the classroom.

So you know, I hate to start naming organizations, but I - in my state, there are other organizations that have great parent programs, so it's just a matter of gathering those but looking at them yourself to see if they are - if they compliment what you're trying to do, because you can really undo a lot of stuff if it's not moving in the same direction that you're trying to go with your evidence-based program.

Tish Hall: Okay. That is all of our online questions. Are there any additional questions from the callers that are on the phone?

Coordinator: We do have a final question on the phone. We have (Gina Fila). Your line is open and state your organization.

(Gina Fila): Hi. The organization is Indiana State Department of Health, and my question is you spoke a lot about parent communication in terms of prevention and kind of having the talk about sexual risk behaviors and everything.

Barb Flis: Yes.

(Gina Fila): Do you have any tips or resources or suggestions on how to better communicate with parents of pregnant and parenting teens? Those teens who have already decided to carry their pregnancy to term and deliver a child.

Barb Flis: So you're talking about programs for them?

(Gina Fila): Yes, for the parents of the pregnant and parenting teens.

Barb Flis: For the parents of - yes. Okay.

Again, I think to bring them together and let them talk with each other a little bit about this. And from their conversations, you'll find out where their needs are - what are their most pressing needs, and then try to serve them from there.

Minnesota has a statewide organization. They just changed their name. It's now Teen Wise, and I - they come to mind first as the people who have done a lot of work in the area of parenting teens.

You know, I think all of this is not too different, it's just working with that subgroup and then finding out what they need and then filling that gap. I'm

sorry if it's not - if I don't have a better answer for you. It's a little challenging without getting into the nitty-gritty of like what we're working with, but Indiana I hope that's better than no answer at all.

(Gina Fila): Oh, definitely. Thank you.

Barb Flis: Okay honey.

Coordinator: All right. And from the phone, currently we're showing no questions.

Barb Flis: Okay.

I certainly appreciate - I see that like 78 of you have stayed on, so I am just so humbled by this. Thank you so much for giving your attention to this.

And I also want to say that you know if you have further questions, you know we'll get you the PowerPoint, we'll get you the parent survey through Tish or whoever she designates. If you have follow-up stuff afterwards, they will get it to me and I will get back to you through her, okay?

Tish Hall: Thank you, Barb.

Barb Flis: Yes.

Coordinator: All right. Thank you. That does conclude today's conference. You may disconnect at this time.

END