



I'm under the age of 18. Do I need my parents' permission to visit the Annex Teen Clinic?

No. Minors - teens under the age of 18 - have the right to confidential (private) medical services for preventing pregnancy and preventing sexually transmitted infections. This means that youth do NOT need permission from their parents/guardians to receive sexual health care services provided at the Annex Teen Clinic or any other clinic in Minnesota.

A minor's right to access confidential health care is guaranteed by the Minors' Consent Law (Minnesota Statute 144.341-347). Confidential access to information and services can help to reduce risky behaviors; particularly behaviors that can lead to pregnancy and STIs.

Learn more at: www.sexedforlife.org/handouts/minors.pdf & www.sexedforlife.org/handouts/SEFL.MDHFS.report.2005.pdf

What services are covered by the Minors' Consent Law?

Services covered by minor consent are confidential health services. These include:

- Pregnancy-related care: Pregnancy testing, prenatal care, labor and delivery services and options counseling.
- Contraceptive care: Getting birth control.
- Alcohol and other drug abuse: Evaluation for alcohol and other drug abuse, counseling, treatment and detox programs.
- Emergency care: When requiring a parent's consent would delay treatment and put the minor's life or health at risk. This also includes sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, treatment, counseling and support for STIs.
- Inpatient mental health services: A minor 16 years or older may admit herself or himself to a treatment facility for mental health services.

What about abortion?

Abortion is not included in the Minors' Consent Law, however, it is possible for a minor (someone under the age of 18) to have an abortion without telling their parents/guardians by getting a "judicial bypass." Judicial bypass means the court will grant permission for the minor to get an abortion, and the minor will not have to notify their parent/guardian. Clinics that provide abortions will have answers to the many questions someone might have, and will help the minor get the court's permission for an abortion.

To learn more, contact a clinic that provides abortion services in Minnesota:
www.gynpages.com/ACOL/minnesota.html. (This site is sponsored by the National Abortion Federation.)

The role of parental involvement

Why do some teens not want their parent or guardian involved? Some feel their parents or guardians may not be supportive. For most teens, however, it is part of growing up and taking on more responsibility. Most caring parents find it hard to give up taking care of their children. Most teens want their parents to know that they are willing and capable of taking on decisions for their health care. For them, seeking confidential services is a wise and responsible decision.

- Fifty-five percent of adolescents discuss their use of reproductive health services with their parents and an even greater number involve their parents in the event of an unplanned pregnancy (4).
- The minors' consent law does not ignore the value of parent-child communication. In fact, health care professionals help adolescents reconnect and communicate better with parents and adults (1).
- Current law allows health care professionals to inform parents or guardians about a minor's health status in situations in which failure to inform them would jeopardize the health of the minor.



What if I want to inform my parents?

Some teens want to involve their parents or guardians in such important decisions such as preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections or getting an abortion. Sometimes it is hard to begin the conversation. We encourage you to talk with your parents about these topics. They may be relieved you brought it up!

It's not unusual for teens to want their parent or guardians to know more about their health care services and to even look at their medical records. The Annex Teen Clinic is happy to talk with you about how to do this. In order for a parent or guardian to view confidential records, clients must sign a "Release of Information Form" giving the clinic and the health care provider permission for your parents to view your records.

What is making it hard for you to bring up the topic with your caregivers?

Sometimes youth will have to be the ones to begin sensitive conversations with parents or guardians. Some reasons why it may be difficult to start a conversation:

- **Fear that they just don't understand.** Many young people feel that adults "just don't understand" what it's like to be young today. Although adults do not have the same experiences as you, there are lots of similarities. What you and they both have in common is that they want the best for you. Sharing your ideas and concerns will help both you and them get to know each other better.
- **Embarrassment.** Sex and sexuality are considered, by some, to be a sensitive topic. Some people grow up with the wrong idea that sexual feelings and activities are 'bad' or 'wrong'. In fact, sex and sexuality aren't good or bad, they are just part of life.
- **You can reduce the sense of embarrassment by getting factual, accurate, non-judgmental information.** It might also help to try out discussion starters with trusted adults or friends. Embarrassment will only go away by practicing communication and getting the discussion started.
- **Unfamiliarity.** Some young people have never had sensitive discussions with their caregivers. In some families, sex may be a taboo subject that no one talks about.
- **Concern that your parents will think talking about sex means you are having sex or that you are too sexual.** You can start by telling your parents that there are many respected studies that show that young people who know and understand sex and sexuality are the ones who are less likely to be having sex.
- **Time.** It never seems to be the 'right time'. This can be the case either because discussions get "put-off" or because youth and caregivers all have very busy schedules.

Some tips to help start the discussion about sex and sexuality with your parent or guardian:

1. Communicate about less sensitive topics on a day-to-day basis. Tell them about your every day experiences. This will make it easier to talk about more sensitive or personal topics.
2. Begin the more personal or sensitive conversations by talking about a book, a tv show, a movie or a conversation with a friend as a way of introducing the ideas you want to discuss.
3. Talk about the issue as if it were a concern or experience of a "friend".
4. Whenever you can, share information about your feelings, ideas, goals and concerns.
5. Ask about their feelings, ideas, goals, and concerns. A sincere effort to learn about them as people is always welcomed. If they choose not to communicate about their own feelings, respect their privacy.
6. Listen as well as talk. Be careful not to get too caught up in your own thoughts or concerns.



MORE ABOUT THE MINORS' CONSENT LAW

Why do we have the Minors' Consent Law? *

Confidentiality is a basic principle essential in promoting the health of adolescents.

- Research shows that adolescents may not access health services without the guarantee of confidentiality (1).
- Less than twenty percent of teens would seek care related to birth control, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or drug abuse if parental notice were mandated (2).
- Eighty percent of unmarried adolescent females would not seek care if their parents had to be told (2).
- Related research show that mandatory parental consent laws do not convince adolescents to share their health concerns with their parents, but rather increases health risks to adolescents (2,3).

Health care professionals support minor consent.

- The American Medical Association (AMA), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Public Health Association have publicly supported minors' right to consent to their own health care (4).
- Pediatricians described confidentiality as essential to obtaining necessary and factual information from adolescent patients (4).

* (SOURCE: www.coalitionforsexed.org)

Who supports Minors' Consent Law?

Many teens and their families as well as most physicians strongly support teens having confidential health services. Hennepin Medical Society, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians and the American Public Health Association all support providing confidential health services for adolescents.

Do our lawmakers Support Minors' Consent Law?

Most current Minnesota lawmakers (state representatives and senators) agree with those who enacted the law in 1971. Lawmakers support privacy and confidentiality for minors' health care for the same reasons many teens, families and physicians do. In 2003 there was an attempt to change the law to allow parents to have access to confidential records. This time the attempt to change minor's confidentiality was defeated, but further attempts to take away minor's consent might be around the corner. Some adolescent health advocates are concerned there may be other attempts to change the minor consent law in spite of widespread support from research, parents, most lawmakers, the voting public and teens.

You can express your thoughts about the Minors' Consent Law by contacting your legislator. To learn more about how you can support this law, visit the Coalition for Responsible Sex Education at www.coalitionforsexed.org.

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



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

³Reddy DM, Fleming R, Swain C. Effect of mandatory parental notification on adolescent girls' use of sexual health care services. JAMA. 2002;288:710-714.

⁴Adolescent Access to Confidential Health Services, Advocates for Youth
www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/confhlth.htm