

## The Importance Of Talking With Children About Sexual Health

In the past few weeks the Behavior Bulletin has focused on topics related to sexual health and development, how to talk to children, and what to talk about. This week we will learn about **why it is important** for parents and children to have sexual health conversations.



Television and movies often depict sexual health conversations as being one big “talk”. As we have already learned, sexual health conversations should take place ‘early and often’. This approach creates a **open and accepting environment** where youth can ask questions without judgement and obtain honest and factual answers.

Young people will be exposed to information about sexual health from television, friends, school, and the internet. Studies have found that in families where sexual health conversations are occurring, teens are more likely to delay sexual intercourse, make healthier decisions about sex and relationships, and **reduce sexual behaviors** that put them at risk. Even though it may appear that teenagers do not want to talk about sex with their parents, most teens report that their parents have the **biggest** influence over their sexual health decisions.



## Fact Versus Myth

**MYTH**—talking to children about sex, STDs, birth control, and pregnancy is putting ideas in their head or giving the youth permission.

- **FACT**—talking to children about sex improves sexual health decision making.
- **FACT**—research has shown that teaching abstinence-only does not lead to a delay in intercourse, prevent pregnancy, or reduce STDs.
- **FACT**—having these conversations delay initiation of sex, decrease high risk behaviors, and reduce teen pregnancy.

**MYTH**—my child will learn everything they need to know at school.

- **FACT**—only 17 states require medically accurate sexual education.
- **FACT**—the most well regarded sexual education curriculums include materials for the family so that the conversations don’t end when the youth leaves the classroom.
- **FACT**—NY does not have a state-wide mandated sexual education curriculum. A recent study of NYS sexual education curriculums found that the programs failed to provide complete and accurate information about anatomy and reproduction.

### Citations and Sources:

- <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/study-shows-new-york-schools-seriously-lacking-in-sex-education>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org>
- <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/topics/everyday-healthy-living/sexual-health/talk-your-kids-about-sex>
- [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/factsheets/talking\\_teens.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/factsheets/talking_teens.htm)

## Upcoming Events

Date/Time	Topic	Link
Thursday, April 1 3:00pm-5:00pm	A Family’s Guide to Student–Led IEPs	<a href="https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/a-family-s-guide-to-student-led-ieps/">https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/a-family-s-guide-to-student-led-ieps/</a>
Tuesday, April 13 6:00pm-8:00pm	What is Self-Direction?	<a href="https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/what-is-self-direction/">https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/what-is-self-direction/</a>
Thursday, April 15 7:00pm-7:45pm	Mindfulness Stress Reduction Series	<a href="https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/mindfulness-stress-reduction-series-3/">https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/mindfulness-stress-reduction-series-3/</a>



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