



## **GUIDE FOR ADULTS**

This guide is designed for parents, teachers, coaches, school nurses or any adult who has a relationship with a teenager. It is designed to be used with the Adolescent Game Plan Tool and to give trusted adults the communication skills to talk about life planning and help provide information and support for youth to make healthy life decisions.

There is factual information within each section for your knowledge and to share with adolescents. For more information, there are additional resources for both you and teenagers at the end of this document.

### **YOUR FUTURE: ASTRONAUT? SENATOR? TEACHER? NURSE? PARENT?**

Some youth may have an idea of what he/she would like to do after high school. This idea may be more traditional, like going on to college or working. Some may be interested in a dream like becoming a professional athlete. Other youth may want to explore several options before deciding his/her future. Regardless of what path the adolescent pursues, the decisions that are made during middle and high school are very important! Many times young people change their minds about goals, so encourage youth to:

- Keep their options open.
- Take the right preparation courses.
- Take control--learn to be a good student.
- Use time outside of school wisely.
- Start thinking about the future.
- If college is a goal, learn about financial aid programs.
- Get help when it's needed!

#### **Additional Resources:**

<http://mappingyourfuture.org/> - Mapping Your Future is a free resource for career, college, financial aid and money management information. There are resources to help explore careers, prepare for college, pay for college and manage your money.

<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers> - U.S. News' Career Center provides information on emerging career fields and other career planning information.

## **PERSONAL BEHAVIORS**

### **Drugs and Alcohol:**

The average age when youth first try alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) is a survey administered to youth aged 12-21 designed to monitor six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth — behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity, which can lead to issues with obesity. According to the 2009 YRBSS data, 70.5 percent of students in Pennsylvania reported having at least one alcoholic drink at least one day (during his/her life). For the same year, 38.4 percent of students reported they had at least one drink of alcohol during the 30 days before the survey and 35.0 percent of students in Pennsylvania responded affirmatively that they had, “ever used marijuana one or more times during their life.” Additionally, 19.3 percent of students used marijuana one or more times during the 30 days before the survey.

### **Additional Resources:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm> - The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors priority health-risk behaviors and the prevalence of obesity and asthma among youth and young adults. The YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state, territorial, tribal and district surveys conducted by state, territorial and local education and health agencies and tribal governments.

<http://store.samhsa.gov/home> - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Find information issues, conditions, disorders, substances, and treatment, prevention and recovery.

### **Resources for your Teen:**

<http://safeteens.org/drugsalcohol.aspx> - Information on tobacco, alcohol consumption, signs of a drug problem, sex and alcohol, addiction and recovery. Also provides information for youth with alcoholic parents.

### **Unhealthy Dieting**

Dieting has become a national pastime. Americans spend more than \$40 billion dollars each year on dieting and diet related products. Body shape has become a preoccupation with today’s media-saturated society. Models in magazines, actors and actresses, all set the “standard” for thinness yet these women are 98 percent thinner than the average American

woman. In the United States, approximately 10 million females and one million males are fighting a life and death battle with anorexia or bulimia.

Unhealthy decisions about diet during the teen years can lead to future health problems and poor dietary habits. Teens need to understand what types of diets are unhealthy and how they can make healthy dietary decisions that can have lasting positive effects.

A diet that restricts the amount of calories a teen eats can be unhealthy. Teens are going through a process of rapid growth and during this process more nutrients and calories are needed for proper development.

A combination of poor body image, obsession with diet, depression, or other psychological or emotional issues can lead to an eating disorder. Restrictive diets, binge diets, and detox diets can be precursors to more harmful disorders such as Anorexia and Bulimia. Eating disorders can cause heart and kidney problems and even death. Getting help early is important. Treatment involves monitoring, mental health therapy, nutritional counseling and sometimes medicines.

#### Additional Resources:

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) – The National Institute of Mental Health provides information about the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses.

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) – The American Dietetic Association provides nutrition information to help you and your teen make informed food choices and develop sound eating and physical activity habits. There is also information on how to find a registered dietitian in your area.

## **HEALTHY PERSONAL HABITS**

### **Nutrition and Exercise**

During the teen years, tremendous physical changes occur. The body has increased needs at this time for nutrients and minerals, especially iron and calcium. National surveys reveal that teens' diets tend to be high in total fat, sodium and sugar, but lower than needed in iron, calcium and fiber. According to a recent survey, only 58 percent of 12- and 13-year-olds eat breakfast, arguably the most important meal of the day. According to the Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation, 2010, increases in technology have made America's youth more sedentary than before and are at increased risk for obesity.

The most recognized method of losing weight and keeping it off is by limiting calories and exercising. The most important message that teens should repeatedly receive is that it is vital to their health that they make wise nutritional choices as well as make time for regular exercise. Good decisions and habits formed in the teen years will have a positive impact on future health.

### Additional Resources:

[www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov) – Nutrition.gov provides easy, online access to government information on food and human nutrition for consumers.

<http://kidshealth.org/> - Kids Health provides information about health, behavior and development from before birth through the teen years. There are resources for adults and teenagers.

### **Motor Vehicle Safety**

Obtaining a driver’s license is a milestone for teenagers and teaching adolescents to be safe while driving is important. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, accounting for more than one in three deaths among teens. Teen drivers are four times more likely to crash than older drivers and in 2009, about 3,000 teens in the United States aged 15–19 were killed in motor vehicle collisions.

Talk to your teenager about these important steps:

- Follow the rules of the road, including wearing a seatbelt, obeying traffic lights, speed limits and street signs.
- Stay focused while driving—which means avoid cell phones, texting, eating/drinking while operating a motor vehicle.
- Drive only when the adolescent is drug and alcohol free and never allowing drugs or alcohol in the car.
- Parents/Caregivers, allow your teen do the driving when you’re together. Practice is needed, and your calm guidance and reminders will help improve his or her’s driving technique.

### Additional Resources:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/pdf/Parent\\_Teen\\_Driving\\_Agreement-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/pdf/Parent_Teen_Driving_Agreement-a.pdf) - Provides a sample of a parent/teen driving contract

<http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety> - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides statistics on teen driving and resources for parents and educators.

## **SEXUAL HEALTH**

### **Teen Pregnancy:**

Despite recent declines, more than four in 10 teen girls will get pregnant at least once before age 20. The rate of teenage pregnancies in the United States is much higher than those in other western industrialized countries. When adolescent girls give birth, their future prospects will

most likely decline. Compared to women who wait until age 20 or older to become a parent, teen mothers complete less school, are more likely to have large families and are more likely to be single parents.

In addition to the detrimental affects it has on the teen's future, it is also associated with a range of negative effects on the teen's health. Women under age 15 are at 25 times greater risk of dying from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth; 15- to 19-year-old women are at twice the risk.

Children born to teen mothers are also at a significantly increased risk for low birth weight, prematurity, mental retardation, poverty, welfare dependency, poor school performance, insufficient health care and abuse or neglect.

Studies have repeatedly shown that teens want adults in their lives, particularly parents, to talk with them about their attitudes and values related to dating, sexual relationships, marriage and parenting. Included in the conversation should be discussion about future goals. This Game Plan gives you an excellent starting point to begin the conversation.

#### Additional Resources:

<http://www.4parents.gov/> - You can help your son or daughter make healthy choices about sex. This website can help you talk to your child, pre-teen or teen early (and often) about healthy relationships, waiting to have sex, what happens as he or she grows and other important topics. Within, this website is an additional guide for parents about relationships and waiting to have sex, which can be found at: [http://www.4parents.gov/psu\\_english\\_final.pdf](http://www.4parents.gov/psu_english_final.pdf).

<http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/default.aspx> - The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's Parent Portal.

<http://www.siecus.org/> - The Sexuality and Education Council of the United States provides information on sexuality including: Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), teen pregnancy and sexual orientation.

[www.thenationalcampaign.org](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org) – The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy provides state and national data on teen pregnancies. There are resources for parents and teens.

#### Resources for your Teen:

<http://www.safeteens.org/> - Safeteens is your resource for reliable health information and your direct link to Family Planning health centers located throughout Pennsylvania

<http://stayteen.org/> - Stayteen.org provides information for teens through games, quizzes, polls, videos and more. The website was created by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

### **STIs and HIV:**

STIs are the most commonly diagnosed infectious diseases in the United States today. Most STIs are treatable, but some like HIV and herpes are not. Some STIs, like Chlamydia and HPV have been linked to infertility and cervical cancer, respectively. Currently, almost two-thirds of the diagnosed cases in the country are to men and women under the age of 25. Despite commonly held beliefs, worldwide heterosexual sex is the most common way to transmit HIV. Up to 50 percent of all new HIV infections are to those under age 25.

It is important that adolescents understand how to decrease their risk of contracting any of these infectious diseases. STIs and HIV are preventable. It has been demonstrated that where there is access to education on how STIs and HIV are spread and access to preventative screening, the incidence of these diseases declines.

### **Additional Resources:**

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/> - Advocates for Youth champions efforts that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

### **BE HEALTHY (FOR NOW & FOR LATER)**

It is well known that common diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer often run in families. It is important for adolescents to track illness suffered by their parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents to help doctors predict which diseases the adolescent may be at risk for and what steps the teen may take to mitigate those risks. Most Americans know it is important to learn their family history, however only about one-third of Americans have taken the time to do so. Encouraging teens to learn their family health history is a crucial step in preventing diseases and staying healthy.

### **Additional Resources:**

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action> - This tool from the Surgeon General will allow you, or a teen to track their family health history.

### **VACCINES/IMMUNIZATIONS**

Adolescents may require vaccinations to protect them from disease. As children grow older, protection from childhood vaccines can wear off leaving them vulnerable for disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend the following vaccines for all adolescents:

- Tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap)
- Meningococcal vaccine (MCV4)
- HPV vaccine series (Human Papillomavirus)
- Influenza (Flu shot)

Older children, who did not receive *all* recommended doses when younger, should also get the following vaccinations:

- Hepatitis B series
- Polio series
- Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) series
- Varicella (chickenpox) series – A second catch-up varicella shot is recommended for children, adolescents, and adults who have previously received one dose.

Some children may need additional vaccines either due to their own specific health conditions or exposure in households to other people with age-related or health-related risks. The additional vaccines for which your child should be assessed include:

- Pneumococcal polysaccharide (PPV)
- Hepatitis A series

#### Additional Resources:

<http://www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultImmSched/> - Take this quiz to find out which vaccines you or your adolescent may need.

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=557995&mode=2> – The PA Department of Health provides information on which immunizations are REQUIRED for all school children in Pennsylvania.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

### **Physical, Verbal, and Sexual Abuse**

Teenagers sometimes experience physical, emotional or even sexual abuse. Teens who are abused or have experienced abuse when younger often have trouble sleeping, eating and concentrating. Some red flags of teens who are abused may be 1) failure to do well in school, 2) easily frightened or angered or 3) apathetic towards things that he/she used to be passionate about. Abuse is a significant cause of depression in young people. Some teens can only feel better by doing things that could hurt them like cutting or abusing drugs or alcohol. They might even attempt suicide.

According to Advocates for Youth, more than 20 percent of all adolescents report having experienced either psychological or physical violence from an intimate partner. The majority of the victims feel the behavior of their partner is romantic or normal and often hide the abuse from parents and [disapproving] friends.

If you think you know a teen that is being abused by an adult, a peer or their partner it is recommended that you find a qualified counselor who can listen to them and provide treatment recommendations.

#### Additional Resources:

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/> - Advocates for Youth champions efforts that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.

<http://aacap.org> – The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology is a national professional medical association dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for children, adolescents and families affected by mental, behavioral or developmental disorders.

## **EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

### **Depression**

According to the National Institutes of Health, depression in adolescents is frequently caused by the process of maturing and the stress associated with it, conflicts with parents or a disturbing event, such as a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Other events or situations that may cause depression include: bullying, abuse, lack of social skills or stressful life events, particularly such as a death or divorce of parents.

The symptoms of depression include:

- Agitation and irritability
- Decrease or increase in appetite
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, sadness or self-hatred
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once fun
- Thinking or talking about suicide or death
- Trouble sleeping, excessive sleeping or daytime sleepiness

Treatment should be sought if symptoms last more than two weeks, however if an adolescent you care about displays the following signs, call a health care provider immediately:

- Giving most cherished possessions to others
- Personality change
- Risk taking behavior
- Threat of suicide or plans to hurt themselves
- Withdrawal, urge to be alone, isolation

**NEVER IGNORE A SUICIDE THREAT OR ATTEMPT!**



### Additional Resources:

[http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/kid\\_site/documents/MiddleSchool/WhoCanHelp.pdf](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/kid_site/documents/MiddleSchool/WhoCanHelp.pdf) -

Provides a list of county-specific resources available in Pennsylvania

### Resources for your Teen:

1-800-SUICIDE (or 1-800-784-2433) – National Suicide Hotline, which automatically routes the call to the nearest crisis center (someone is available to talk 24 hours a day).

### **Anger**

Anger is a natural emotion that everyone has the right to feel. Anger can become an issue when the teen has no coping skills or anger management techniques. According to SafeYouth.gov more than one in three high school students, both male and female, have been involved in a physical fight. One in nine of those students have been injured badly enough to need medical treatment.

The National Youth Violence Prevention Center has compiled the following list of warning signs that your teen may be having anger management issues:

- Frequent loss of temper over small issues;
- Frequent physical fighting with friends, acquaintances and family members;
- Damaging property while in a fit of anger;
- Use of drugs and/or alcohol;
- Written plans for violent acts;
- Carrying a weapon(s);
- Been the victim of school bullies;
- Gang affiliations;
- Failure to acknowledge the feelings of others;
- Fascination with weapons; and
- Cruelty to animals.

Most teen management professionals agree that dealing with a teen with an anger problem should start at home and believe that most teen anger comes from underlying emotional problems including fear, rejection or failure.

### Additional Resources:

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/sgsummary/summary.htm> - Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General outlines trends in youth violence, and prevention methods.

<http://www.safeyouth.gov> - STRYVE, or Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere, is a national initiative led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent youth violence before it starts among young people ages 10 to 24.

#### Resources for your Teen:

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/> - This website by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration provides information for parents, teachers and adolescents on how to stop and prevent bullying.

#### **Sexual Orientation**

It is a life-changing experience when a child decides to disclose their sexual orientation or “come out.” Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) encourages the following Dos and Don’ts if an adolescent tells you he or she is gay or a lesbian.

##### Do:

- Listen to what the adolescent’s life is like, and what kind of experiences he or she has had in the world.
- Take the time to seek information about the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) people from literature and parents and friends of LGBT people.
- Get professional help if you become severely depressed over your loved one’s sexuality or gender identity.
- Respect the teens right to engage in loving relationships.
- Try to develop trust and openness.

##### Don’t :

- Rush the process of trying to understand the adolescent’s sexuality or gender identity.
- Criticize the teen for being different.
- Try to break up loving relationships.
- Force the adolescent to conform to your ideas of proper sexual behavior.
- Blame yourself because your loved one is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

#### Additional Resources:

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org) - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

<http://www.aclupa.org/issues/lgbtrights> - The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania is dedicated to defending and protecting our individual rights and personal freedoms.

#### **FINANCIAL SECURITY**

According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the top mistakes young people make are as follows:

1. Buying items they don't need and paying extra for them in interest .Encourage youth to think about every purchase before using a credit card. If a consumer pays only the minimum due on a credit card, you may end up paying more in interest charges than what the item initially cost.
2. Getting too deeply in debt – Help the youth recognize signs of a debt problem. These could include borrowing money to pay another loan, deliberately paying bills late, and putting off important activities, such as a doctor visit because you don't have enough money.
3. Paying bills late or otherwise tarnishing their credit reputation – Companies may report late payments to a credit bureau, who prepare credit reports for people who need to know someone's financial reliability. Making late payments will decrease the overall credit score, which could lead to higher interest rates, could cause you to be turned down for a job or apartment.
4. Having too many credit cards – According to FDIC, two to four cards is the right number for most adults. The more cards someone carries, the more likely they may be to use them for impulse purchases.
5. Not saving for the future – Encourage youth to “pay themselves first” This means put money into savings for the future, before bills are paid. Start with a reasonable amount for you, even if it is only \$25 or \$50 per month.
6. Paying too much in fees – ATMs may have fees from \$1 to \$4. Encourage youth to monitor how much money is in their checking accounts to avoid bounced checks and to pay off credit cards in full each month to avoid interest charges.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> - Apply for federal student aid for college.

Resources for your Teen:

<http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/news/cnspr05/index.html> - The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) has designed a special guide for young adults. This guide contains information about common mistakes adolescent make with money, how to manage credit cards, and how to manage checking and savings accounts.