Let's Talk About Sex

Parents Advocating for Healthy Sexual Development for our Teens

May is National Teen Pregnancy Month

When it comes to teen pregnancy, youth in foster care are one of the most vulnerable groups because they tend to take more sexual risks and engage in riskier behaviors than youth not in foster care. Due to some foster youth's increased risky behaviors they tend to experience a high rate of dropping out of school, becoming homeless, being involved in criminal activity and engaging in risky sexual behaviors that often lead to sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy.

The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, set a precedent that youth in care would be provided with support and normalcy through a "reasonable and prudent parent standard." This standard allows you, as the foster parent and caregiver of the youth, to make parental decisions that supports the well-being of the youth in foster care.

This means it is OK to have those tough discussions regarding safe-sex practices and providing opportunities for youth to be educated regarding their sexual health. Promoting healthy sexual development is one important way foster parents can nurture youth in the child welfare system.

SAFY of Nevada has received the True Health Needs Knowledge (THNK) Grant from the Southern Nevada Health District in partnership with the Office of Adolescent Health. The THNK Grant provides comprehensive sex education to youth, ages 13 – 19.

What is Comprehensive Sex Education?

Comprehensive sex education is for ALL youth populations and provides age-appropriate, medically accurate information about abstinence, contraception, and responsible decision making skills when in a relationship. Youth who participate in comprehensive sex education programs do not have sex earlier.

Comprehensive sex education provides the following to youth:

1) Assists in delaying the onset of sexual behaviors
2) Provides medically accurate information
3) Provides age and developmentally appropriate information/ skills to delay sexual initiation
4) Addresses the importance of abstinence
5) Helps youth develop relationship and interpersonal skills

Along with encouraging their kids to attend comprehensive sex education programs, it is the role of the parent to foster an open dialogue with them about sex. Youth, whether in foster care or not, want to be able to discuss sex and relationships with their parent.

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, parents are encouraged to do the following when talking to their youth about sex:

1) Build a relationship on trust and compassion
2) Talk with your foster youth about sex and be specific
3) Spend quality time with your foster youth
4) Supervise/monitor your foster youth
5) Know your foster youth's friends and their families
6) Discourage dating at an early age

While talking to your youth about sex may be awkward or uncomfortable, SAFY of Nevada offers a one-on-one workshop for parents that focuses on supportive, effective adolescent-parent communication by providing talking strategies to parents. Families Talking Together is a great workshop designed to delay sexual behaviors in youth.

If you are interested in learning more about Families Talking Together, please contact Jessi Dorn at dornj@safy.org or the SAFY of Nevada office at 702-385-5331.