

# MOAPPP Monitor

www.moappp.org

Winter 2006

The mission of MOAPPP is to develop and strengthen policies and programs that promote adolescent sexual health, prevent adolescent pregnancy and support adolescent parents.

## What's Wrong with Sex on TV?

David Walsh, Ph.D.

National Institute on Media and the Family

When your kids turn on the TV tonight they'll be twice as likely to see sexual content than they were less than a decade ago. A new study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found just that: the number of sexual scenes on television has doubled since 1998. Perhaps even more disturbing, 70 percent of teens' 20 favorite shows contain sexual content, and almost half of them depicted sexual behavior. Overall, two-thirds of the shows on TV include talk about sex and more than a third actually depict sexual acts.



Should we be worried about this? Yes, but not because sex is bad and kids should not know anything about it. The reason for concern is how the media portray sex. TV and video games do not feature sex as an important part of human nature. They feature it as a form of recreation that is without risk and responsibility.

Consider this fact: only 19 percent of American teenagers report they have good communication with trusted adults about sex and sexuality. That means the overwhelming majority of kids do not. So where are they getting their information and their attitudes about sex? From the media, of course. This is not my opinion — this is what the teens themselves tell us. A

survey published in 2003 revealed that 75 percent of American teens believe that media portrayals of sex influence their and their peers' beliefs and behaviors. Another study in 2004 showed that teens who watch a lot of sexually explicit media are much more likely to be sexually active.

**"TV and video games do not feature sex as an important part of human nature. They feature it as a form of recreation that is without risk and responsibility."**

We have inadvertently delegated sex education to the media. That's pretty scary when you think of the lessons about sex that your typical TV sitcom or video game provides. Worse yet, they seem to be exactly the opposite of the lessons we want our kids to learn.

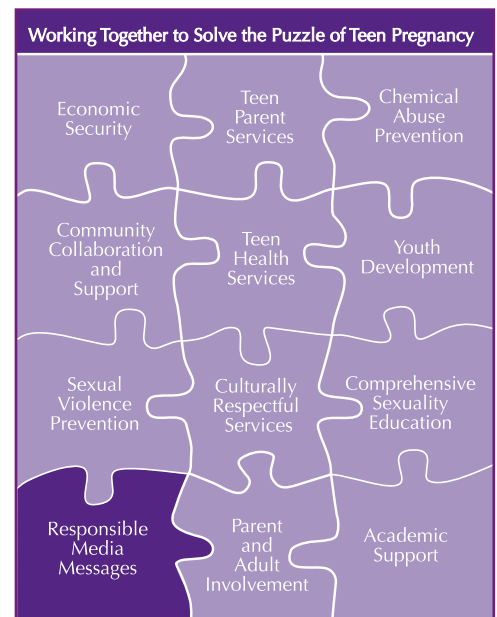
So what's a MediaWise parent to do? Two things. The first is that we need to start communicating with our kids about sex and about sexuality. Sex is about biology. Sexuality is about biology, psychology, values and spirituality. Communication on these matters can't involve lecturing, scare tactics or demands. It has to be done through listening and honest sharing. The only way kids will learn the values we want them to learn is if we take our children seriously and let them know what we think and why.

Secondly, we need to be watching what our kids watch. There are some shows that

should be out of bounds. And when sex does appear on TV in ways that we don't agree with, we need to let our kids know that we notice. How else will our kids know the difference between the people on the screen and the ones who love them in real life?

David Walsh, Ph.D. is the founder of the MediaWise Movement, a program of the National Institute on Media and the Family ([www.mediawise.org](http://www.mediawise.org)). His latest book, *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, is a national bestseller.

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[www.mediafamily.org/mediawisecolumns/tvsex\\_mw.shtml](http://www.mediafamily.org/mediawisecolumns/tvsex_mw.shtml)  
1-888-672-KIDS (612-672-5437).



MOAPPP's Teen Pregnancy Puzzle illustrates the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive solutions based on research.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

# Dear Friends,



This issue of the Monitor focuses on the Responsible Media Messages piece of the Teen Pregnancy Puzzle. We live in a media-dominated culture, and process more information from more media sources than ever before in our history. Teenagers choose from a media smorgasbord that offers them an amazing array of tempting treats.

On average, young people spend 6.5 hours every day using one kind of media or another, according to a national organization called Mediascope. That 6.5 hours is filled with television, movies, videos, magazines, music and the Web. It's important to consider the cumulative effect of this level of consumption - particularly given the fact that so much of what is offered has questionable "nutritional" value.

Our guest writers present responses to this media culture that address individuals and families. MOAPPP Board member, Mala Thao, brings us an account of a wonderful project focused on girls developing positive media messages; David Walsh, Ph.D., founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, writes about concrete steps parents can take to create "Mediawise" children. The Research and Resources page highlights system-level responses from Advocates for Youth and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The Policy page suggests one tool to express your views when confronted with irresponsible media messages. We also feature an update about MOAPPP's work on behalf of teen parents - and our own use of media to promote it.

Dig in, enjoy, and digest well.

Sincerely,

Brigid Riley  
Executive Director

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### MOAPPP Monitor

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The Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting, a non-profit organization, is composed of individuals and organizations in Minnesota that work to strengthen policies and programs related to adolescent pregnancy, prevention and parenting in Minnesota.

# Advocacy Messages in the Media

What's covered in the media clearly gets the attention of decision makers, from local elected officials to members of congress. For this reason, as adolescent sexual health advocates, we must secure partnerships with the media so that we are able to communicate to large audiences our key messages regarding what we know works to promote and protect adolescent sexual health. Likewise, it is our responsibility to make sure that all media coverage related to our fields of work is accurate and complete. We must respond with timeliness when the media sends messages to the community that we know misrepresent fact. A letter to the editor is a very effective advocacy tool, capable of reaching thousands of citizens including policymakers and their staff. Unlike newspaper articles, a letter to the editor is printed in your own words, takes only a few minutes to write and its impact can make a difference that will last years. It's important to craft your messages carefully. The following are a few tips to help you undertake this task.

1. Use the following salutation: Dear Editor
2. Be sure to check letter specifications for newspapers; roughly two paragraphs are ideal.
3. Type or print your letter so that it is easy to read.
4. Be sure to include your name, address and email.
5. Make your letter timely and connected to a recent article, editorial or letter to the editor.
6. Tell a personal story if possible.
7. Address the facts about sexuality education and teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection prevention; use clear terms and do not use abbreviations.
8. Find others to write letters to the editor on similar topics.
9. Familiarize yourself with the coverage and editorial position of the paper to which you are writing. Refute or support specific statements, address relevant facts that are ignored, but do avoid blanket attacks on the media in general or the newspaper in particular.
10. Be persistent, keep writing!

It is important that your letter be timely. If you see an issue come up in a story and you want to write a letter about it, do so within a day of the story being printed. Your letter is more likely to get published if it serves as a follow-up to a hot topic or recently printed story. Here is an example of a letter to the editor that was actually printed in response to a Star Tribune columnist's misrepresentation of comprehensive sex education:

"A teachable moment..."

Katherine Kersten's October 17 column about the Vikings party gives a misleading impression of what sexuality education in our schools is about. I'd like to set the record straight.

There are many compelling reasons to support comprehensive sexuality education programs. Over 125 national organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, support teaching youth about both abstinence and contraception.

Studies show teens receiving comprehensive sex ed are more likely than those receiving abstinence-only-until-marriage messages to delay sexual activity, use contraceptives and have fewer partners. A 2002 study found 85 percent of voters want youth to receive a comprehensive approach to sex ed that includes teaching about both abstinence and contraception

October is Let's Talk Month, an excellent opportunity to encourage parents to talk with their children and teens about sexuality - the good, the bad and the ugly! Let's Talk and turn the Vikings escapades into a teachable moment.

By Jan Hayne, Stillwater  
October 22, 2005

This is an excellent example of an effective letter to the editor. It is timely and makes reference to a specific, recent column. The writer uses facts and refers to recent scientific studies and also makes reference to a public awareness campaign (Let's Talk Month) that further promotes adolescent sexual health. This letter is a successful use of the media for advocacy purposes



## CONTACT THE MEDIA IN YOUR AREA

Directory of all Minnesota newspapers:  
<http://www.mnnews.com/>

Directory of all Minnesota radio stations:  
<http://www.usnpl.com/radio/mnradio.html>

Directory of all Minnesota television stations:  
<http://www.newsdirectory.com/tv.php?p=mn>

# TVbyGIRLS

Mala Thao

TVbyGIRLS Advisory Board and MOAPPP Board Member

Standing in a crowded room at Intermedia Arts, friends and family gather together to morally and financially support the 12 talented girls who are giddy and confident at the same time. The girls' mentors seem more nervous than the girls themselves. This is their first fundraising event, but you can't tell by their demeanor; it's as if they've done this a million times.

Since 2004, these young women, aged 14-17, have been creating videos and expanding the vitality of images about girls and women through a program called TVbyGirls. TVbyGirls believes the best way to combat destructive media images is to help young women create positive media and explore their own ideas, inspired by individual experiences.



In their online video, "This is ME!," TVbyGIRLS confronts the media stereotypes of girls' roles in a feisty video poem about the complexities of who they really are. Featuring, and written by, the TVbyGIRLS CORE GIRLS this video is for every girl who knows she is a bundle of marvelous contradictions.

the girls' reality and seek solutions to issues in their lives. To help facilitate their self expression and growth, every week each of the "Core Girls" meets with an adult mentor

from the media industry, including a publisher of nationally acclaimed magazines for girls and a producer of Emmy award-winning television and film programs.

At the recent fundraising event, when the showcase of videos was over, the girls sat in the "hot seat" and answered questions from audience members with sophisticated and energetic responses. As they answered the questions, one thing was clear, these young women are armed with skills, enthusiasm and resources to guide them on a positive life path. They know what they want and are headed in a direction to make it happen. Far from their minds are some of the concerning issues that some teenage girls face including drugs, low self-esteem and teen pregnancy. It isn't that they aren't exposed to these issues; it's just that they have developed an inner strength and broader vision of their future that guides them. Armed with self-confidence and respect for girls, the future of girls looks bigger and brighter everyday.



Through monthly media workshops, a visual literacy curriculum, individual mentoring and participation in a weekly national television series, TVbyGirls encourages the development of self-expression, critical thinking and self-confidence of young women. In addition to media, this past year they explored issues around girl culture, adolescent changes, stereotypes, leadership traits and women in political office. The program teaches participants who are referred to as "Core Girls," to defuse the power of negative media messages by giving strength to girls' ideas.

In exciting hands-on workshops, the participants analyze print and moving media, explore visual metaphors and decode the hidden cultural messages in pictures and sound. However, the TVbyGirls program staff realize that analyzing media isn't enough, so to empower the girls, they create images and messages that speak to

TVbyGIRLS continues to conduct visual literacy and media making workshops for girls. To find out more information about TVbyGIRLS check out their website at [www.tvbygirls.net](http://www.tvbygirls.net) or contact Barbara Weiner, 3404 Pleasant Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55408, 612-823-1809.

SAVE THESE DATES

Comprehensive  
Sexuality  
Education

Teen  
Parent  
Services

Sexual  
Violence  
Prevention

Culturally  
Respectful  
Services

Parent  
& Adult  
Involvement

Youth  
Development

# MOAPPP'S 2006 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## 15 Years of Bringing the Pieces Together

May 4-5, 2006

Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center, MN

Join us for two days of dynamic speakers, challenging workshops and plenty of opportunities to network with Minnesota professionals committed to teen pregnancy prevention and support for pregnant and parenting teens.

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Douglas Kirby, Ph.D.**, Senior Research Scientist, ETR Associates  
"25 Years of Pregnancy Prevention: Reflections on Lessons Learned, Progress Made and the Promise for the Future"

**Sharon Cooper, M.D.**, FAAP, University of North Carolina  
"The Normalization of Sexual Violence and Its Impact on Prevention"

**Shelby Knox**, Student, University of Texas, and Youth Activist highlighted in the film *The Education of Shelby Knox*, "Youth Activism and Engagement: The Fight for Comprehensive Sexuality Education"

## MOAPPP's Annual Benefit Event

Thursday, May 11, 2006 , 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

MOAPPP will be recognizing its 15-year history as "Minnesota's resource for teen pregnancy information." This is a MOAPPP event you will not want to miss! Watch for more information on MOAPPP's website.

# Making the Connection: Linking Adolescent Parents with Core Service Providers

Sara Stry

MOAPPP Adolescent Parent Network Intern

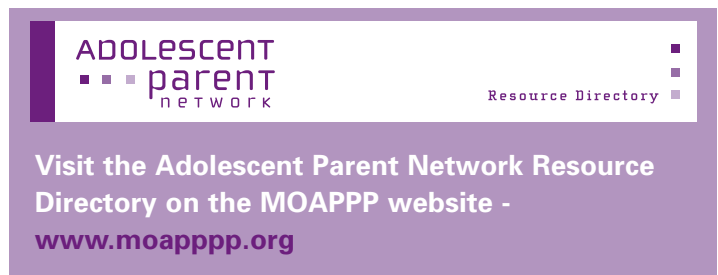
Although the teen birth rate is dropping in Minnesota, the latest data indicate that there are still close to 5,000 births to teen parents in the state each year<sup>1</sup>. Though the numbers are down, the consequences for these young families remain the same. For many teens, becoming a parent means the end of their high school education, an increased need for public assistance and a greater risk of health problems for their child. Like all parents, teen parents want to be good parents and watch their children thrive. However, given the odds against them, young parents need quality support services to help them reach this goal.

Research points to the types of services critical to facilitate long-term self-sufficiency of young parents, build their parenting capacity and ensure the healthy growth and development of their children. These core services include:

- **Flexible quality schooling**  
*Example: Allowing pregnant and parenting students flexible school schedules for social service and medical appointments means the difference between their graduation and their failure.*
- **Case management and family support services**  
*Example: The most important factor in preventing subsequent pregnancies may be the strength of the relationship between the teen mother and the individual working with her.*
- **Access to prenatal care and reproductive health services**  
*Example: Research suggests that encouraging teen mothers to use a long-lasting, non-coital-dependent contraceptive, such as Depo-Provera may delay additional births.<sup>3</sup>*
- **Parenting and life skills education**  
*Example: Many adolescent mothers have unrealistic expectations of what motherhood is like and little knowledge of child health and development.<sup>2</sup>*
- **Quality child care for their children**  
*Example: Research suggests that providing childcare for children of teen mothers who are attending school or employment programs may delay additional births to first-time teen mothers.<sup>3</sup>*
- **Preventive health care for their children**  
*Example: Well-baby check-ups provide opportunities for physiological and behavioral observations that help identify strengths, issues and potential risk factors for the child and family.<sup>2</sup>*

Armed with the knowledge of what works, MOAPPP is in the process of seeking funding to expand its support of adolescent parent providers around the state. MOAPPP has developed a three-stage plan to accomplish this goal:

1. Establish connections with adolescent parent service providers in Minnesota and encourage communication between them.
2. Assess training, resource and advocacy needs of adolescent parent service providers in Minnesota.
3. Provide appropriate training, resources and advocacy at the state and local levels.



ADOLESCENT  
parent  
NETWORK

Resource Directory

Visit the Adolescent Parent Network Resource Directory on the MOAPPP website - [www.moappp.org](http://www.moappp.org)

As a first step in this process, MOAPPP recently created a web-based guide to adolescent parent programs and services throughout the state. *The Minnesota Adolescent Parent Network Resource Directory* provides a list of available resources for pregnant and parenting teens, and facilitates consultation and collaboration between providers around the state. The directory allows users to search for programs in three ways: by county, school district and service provided. With 120 programs currently listed in the directory, MOAPPP already has plans to expand the breadth of the directory to include additional resources, e.g. housing, mental health, etc.

Please visit the MOAPPP website, [www.moappp.org](http://www.moappp.org) to see firsthand how *The Minnesota Adolescent Parent Network Resource Directory* is connecting young families throughout Minnesota with services that will help them succeed.

#### Citations:

<sup>1</sup>MOAPPP. 2005 Minnesota State Adolescent Sexual Health Report.

<sup>2</sup>Batten, S. and Stowell, B. (1996). School Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Guidelines for Quality and Best Practice. Center for Assessment and Policy Development, [www.capd.org](http://www.capd.org).

<sup>3</sup>(2004) Another Chance: Preventing Additional Births to Teen Mothers. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org).

## RESEARCH

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## RESOURCES

**MediaWise & The National Institute on Media and the Family**

Examines media impacts on children and youth and what to do about it. The goal of the National Institute on Media and the Family is to provide resources for educators, parents, community leaders and others concerned about the impact of media on children, families and communities. Includes a listing of organizations concerned with media education and media literacy issues. [www.mediafamily.org/](http://www.mediafamily.org/)

**Advocates for Youth — The Media Project**

Offers entertainment professionals the latest facts, research assistance, script consultation, and story ideas on today's sexual and reproductive health issues. Provides links for you to write to the broadcasters and the FCC to express your support of accurate sexual health information on TV through the Take P.A.R.T. program. [www.themediaproject.com/](http://www.themediaproject.com/)

**The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

Collaborates with media industry leaders to deliver important messages about preventing teen pregnancy. Here you can view a list of TV programs and episodes in which the Campaign has collaborated with national media sources. [www.teenpregnancy.org/media/nowshowing.asp](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/media/nowshowing.asp)

**The Kaiser Family Foundation Study of Entertainment Media and Health**

Reports the impact and prevalence of children's media use.

- Sex on TV 4. A biennial study of amount and nature of sexual content on TV.
- Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 year-olds.
- Reaching the MTV Generation: Research on the Impact of the Kaiser Family Foundation/MTV Public Education Campaign on Sexual Health Report.

[www.kff.org/entmedia/index.cfm](http://www.kff.org/entmedia/index.cfm)

**Children NOW**

A national organization for people who care about children and want to ensure that they are the top public policy priority. Examines current issues concerning children and the media and highlight research, policy work and media industry perspectives. [www.childrennow.org/issues/media/](http://www.childrennow.org/issues/media/)

**Media Advocacy Manual  
American Public Health Association**

This manual provides basic information about how to connect with the media, including sections on media lists, news releases, letters to the editor, editorial board meetings and more.

[www.apha.org/news/Media\\_Advocacy\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.apha.org/news/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf)



## MOAPPP Monitor

Newsletter of the Minnesota  
Organization on Adolescent  
Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting

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## Support MOAPPP and become a member today!

**MOAPPP counts on memberships to provide the many programs and services that you, and others who work with and care about youth, have come to depend on:**

- **Annual conference:** the only one of its kind in Minnesota that showcases prevention research, strategies and program ideas
- **Frequent trainings** throughout the year bringing you the latest information and skills
- **Valuable information** about the most current science-based, best practice strategies from the field
- **A website** that contains over 150 pages of online information and resources
- **Public policy and advocacy initiatives, trainings and information**
- **MOAPPP Monitor**
- **Electronic E-Monthly**
- **Networking opportunities** with others who work in the field
- **Community awareness** through media partnerships

**Go to [www.charitybox.com/moappp](http://www.charitybox.com/moappp) and join online** by using a credit card. It only takes minutes and you get an immediate acknowledgement!