



# Setting Up An Adolescent Friendly Environment

## **ENVIRONMENT**

An adolescent-friendly atmosphere is important to setting the stage for an office visit. Magazines geared toward adolescents, as well as posters and brochures with targeted health messages in patient areas are important in making adolescents feel welcome. A separate waiting area and confidential space to complete paperwork (away from parents and others waiting to be seen) is essential.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Without confidentiality protections, some adolescents forgo care for pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections or substance abuse. Assurances of confidentiality can increase an adolescents' willingness to disclose information, report truthfully and consider a return visit.

## **PARENT PRESENCE**

Adolescents are less likely to share information about risk behaviors when parents are present. Every treatment setting should establish routine procedures that separate parents from their adolescent children during part of each office visit.

## **RESOURCES**

Adolescents may not have the ability to follow through with external resources or referrals provided to them. Transportation and costs are significant barriers to obtaining needed resources.



# Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

## Adolescent Friendly Office Space Checklist

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | Separate waiting space  |
|  | Setting up special times for adolescent visits  |
|  | Allowing more time for the first visit  |
|  | Adolescent friendly décor   |
|  | Reading materials/magazines for teens   |
|  | Targeted health messages through posters, brochures, hotline numbers and websites   |
|  | Examination table should not face the door  |
|  | Chairs in exam rooms should be utilized for the adolescent interview<br><i>(do not put an adolescent on the exam table while health professional is in a chair or in a chair with professional behind a desk)</i> |
|  | Adolescents should not be asked to undress until after the interview  |

## Visit Guidelines for Health Professionals

- 1) Enjoy adolescents *(display a positive attitude, be empathetic and attentive)*
- 2) Establish rapport *(ask about activities or hobbies they enjoy)*
- 3) Ensure confidentiality *(discuss confidentiality prior to beginning an assessment or interview)*
- 4) Discuss billing arrangements *(an insurance payment may result in parents finding out about visits and diagnosis, however a neutral diagnosis can be used in many situations)*
- 5) Involve the family *(discuss concerns of parents at beginning or end of the visit)*
- 6) Act as an advocate *(share adolescent's positive attributes, abilities and characteristics with parents/guardians)*
- 7) Discover hidden agendas *(a review of adolescent risk behaviors during the visit may uncover many other concerns)*
- 8) Information gathering using developmental approach *(refer to "Adolescent Sexual Developmental" document)*
- 9) Limit note taking *(take as few notes as possible during the visit)*