



TALKING TO PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CARERS

In this fact sheet, 'parents' includes guardians, carers and any other significant adult that may encourage, or hinder, young people's engagement with sexual health.

Actively engaging with parents about sexual health programs and activities may overcome potential misunderstandings and build parental trust and support for your work with young people.

Research shows parents want their children to be well informed about sex, relationships and sexual health.

Parents want to be kept informed about programs being offered¹. They also want reassurance that the people providing the information have the skills and qualifications to do the work in a way that respects the diversity of values among young people and their families. Parents appreciate communication about programs and their content, and value opportunities to discuss questions they have with workers¹.

Parents often lack confidence in fulfilling their role as sexual health educators for their children. They often request information and guidance in sharing their values with their children. And they often ask for help with having conversations about sex, including how to deal with sexual health information prominent in the community.

As a youth worker you can:

1. Consult regularly with parents about the content and delivery of sexual health programs.
2. Maintain opportunities for parents to discuss queries with program coordinators and provide feedback.
3. Support parents to fulfil their role as sexual health educators by encouraging them to use **Talk Soon Talk Often**. This is a great resource for parents wanting information and guidance.
4. Maintain a respectful balance between parental and community values and the rights and needs of the young people to receive accurate, complete and developmentally appropriate sexual health support and education.
5. Young people have a right to confidentiality and to make informed decisions about their own health. Always gain consent before sharing information about clients' sexual health with a parent.

References and resources

1. 'Parents and Sex Education', Department of Health (Western Australia). See healthywa.wa.gov.au
2. Talk Soon, Talk Often. See talksoontalkoften.wordpress.com

Reach Out Parents provides reliable information and support. See parents.au.reachout.com