



Discussion Guide

For Adults Working with Teens

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Should a Teen Under 18 Need Her Parent's Permission to Have an Abortion?

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Should a teen under 18 need her parent's permission to have an abortion? Yes. Abortion is a major procedure, so it seems logical that a teen girl should get her parent's permission in order to have one. After all, teens can't even get aspirin from their school nurses without their parent's signature.

Deciding whether or not to have an abortion can be a tough decision for adult women. Imagine how much more difficult it can be for a teen. This decision should not be made alone. It is important that teen girls have someone to turn to for advice and comfort. Who better to console and support them than the person who has loved and cared for them since birth?

Although we hate to admit it, we teens have a lot of growing up to do and need our parents' guidance from time to time. Engaging in sex comes with consequences and telling your parents if you are pregnant and want an abortion can be one of them.

Think about this situation from a parent's point of view. If you found out that your 16-year-old daughter was pregnant, you would want to be notified that she was pregnant and that she wanted to have an abortion. You would want to be there to help your child make the choice that's best for her and to make sure she gets the best care possible.

Of course, there are cases where a teen feels like she cannot involve her parents, such as if the pregnancy was caused by a parent. With cases like these, talking to your parents is not an option; however, there is "judicial bypass," which allows teen girls to have an abortion with a judge's permission. The teen has to convince the judge that she is mature enough to make this decision without her parents or that the abortion is in her best interest.

If teens and parents could better communicate with one another, teens would have

someone to talk to if they had questions or got into a situation where they needed help. How are we supposed to build an environment of honest communication if parents aren't informed that their child is having a medical procedure? Yes, a teen's privacy is protected if she doesn't have to get her parent's consent. But isn't it also creating an environment where teens don't communicate with their parents? Although we tend to forget, we are our parents' children, and they are responsible for us. They deserve to know what is going on in our lives.

Should a teen under 18 need her parent's permission to have an abortion? No. Abortions occur every day for many reasons, but in some states, an ill-prepared teen facing an unplanned pregnancy needs the consent of her parents to have an abortion. The teen girl's parents didn't decide if their daughter was ready to have sex, so why should they have the right to determine if she is prepared for motherhood?

I understand many parents are opposed to abortion due to their own moral and religious beliefs, but the truth is, the decision is ultimately not the parents'. It is not their body the procedure is being done to. Do not misinterpret me, though. I do believe teen girls should talk with their parents if they get pregnant. Communication helps a pregnant teen express her fears to her parents and seek support. But in the end, the choice to have an abortion should be hers.

Some teens, who face opposition from their parents in having an abortion, may delay the procedure, which can only make it more difficult. The earlier the abortion, the more safe it is.

Sometimes there are situations where a teen girl having to get her parent's consent is just ridiculous. In cases of incest, for example, requiring a teen to get a parent, who maybe her abuser, to give permission for an abortion makes no sense and puts the teen at the mercy of someone who is abusing her.

Regardless of the situation, the choice to have or not have an abortion should belong only to the teen girl. It is her body and, most importantly, her life the pregnancy will affect the most drastically. Many teens are just not ready to be parents, and if they are mature enough to recognize they are not physically equipped or emotionally prepared for a child, why should they not be allowed a choice in an abortion?

Parental Consent:

If you are a minor, in some states you may need parental consent—or permission—from one or both parents before having an abortion. Laws vary from state to state. In some states, a grandparent, aunt or uncle can take the place of a parent. And in other states, no parental consent is required at all. Depending on your state's law, consent may be given through a letter, phone call or in person.

Parental Notification:

Some states require the parent or parents to be notified of their child's abortion either before or after the procedure, depending on the state. In some states, the physician who

will perform the abortion must notify the parents 48 hours before.

Judicial Bypass:

A judge may allow a minor to get an abortion without parental consent or notification even if the state requires it. In order to get a judicial bypass, an application is filed at a court and a confidential hearing takes place. In some states, minors are provided with free legal representation under Jane's Due Process.

Make sure to find out what your state laws are at Sexetc.org/state.