



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and Parental Monitoring

June 2008

“Do you know where your teen is? Who they’re with?” Research has shown that parents who are consistent and in control of their teens have better relationships with their kids. This does not mean that parents have teens under constant supervision; it means that they have open communication with their teenagers. This concept can be referred to as parental monitoring.

Examples of Parental Monitoring

In the 2005 Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), parental monitoring was measured by teen responses to the following statements:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
My parent(s) know where I am and what I’m doing after school.	6%	5%	11%	77%
If I am going to be home late, I am expected to call my parent(s) to let them know.	9%	6%	13%	72%
When I go out at night, my parent(s) know where I am, and who I’m going to be with.	5%	6%	16%	72%
My parent(s) know who my friends are.	4%	5%	14%	76%
My parent(s) know the parents of my friends.	6%	9%	26%	57%
My parent(s) know what internet sites I visit	15%	16%	24%	46%
My parent(s) know how I spend my money.	7%	11%	25%	55%

According to the 3,747 7th through 12th graders surveyed, parents in southwest Wisconsin are doing a good job of tracking who their teens friends are, expecting calls if a teen will be home late, and knowing where their sons and daughters are after school. Areas for improvement include knowing the parents of their teen’s friends, knowing what internet sites teens visit, and knowing how teens spend their money.

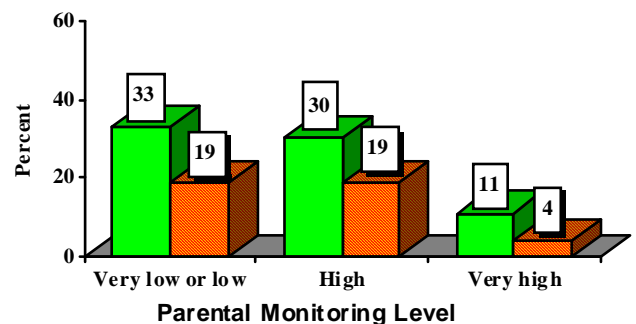
Overall, based on teens’ perceptions, 68% of teens (73% of females and 62% of males) have parents who monitor them at a “very high” level and another 24% have parents who practice “high” levels of parental monitoring. Seventeen percent (17%) of students perceived “low” or “very low” levels of parental monitoring (21% of males and 12% of females).

Monitoring Can Reduce Risky Behaviors

Parental monitoring is a powerful tool when it comes to preventing teens from engaging in risky behaviors. In the SWYS results, the evidence is clear that parents who constantly communicate with their teens are less likely to have teens who are taking risks.

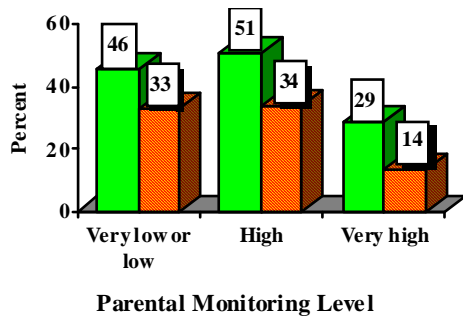
Parental Monitoring and Smoking

As seen in the graph to the right, of the teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring, only 11% report smoking a cigarette in the past 30 days compared to 33% of teens whose parents practice “very low or low” parental monitoring. Likewise of teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring, only 4% used



■ Smoked Cigarette - Past 30 Days ■ Used Marijuana - Past 30 Days

Marijuana in the past 30 days compared to 19% of teens whose parents practice “very low or low” parental monitoring. (Note: Overall, 89% of teens who’s parent(s) practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring have never tried tobacco, 96% have never tried marijuana, and 90% have never used someone else’s prescription drug.)

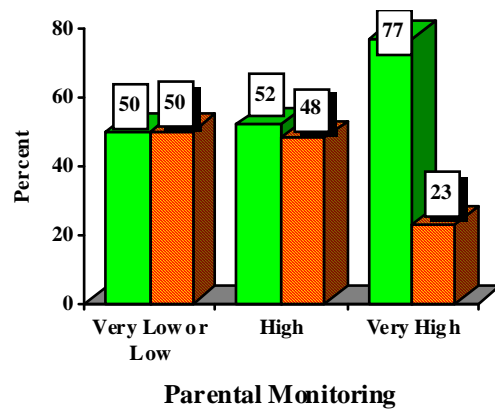


■ Drank - Past 30 Days ■ Binge Drank - Past 30 Days

Parental Monitoring and Alcohol

As the graph above shows, 29% of teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring reported they drank in the month prior to the survey and 14% binge drank. In comparison, of the teens whose parents practice “low or very low” parental monitoring, 46% reported they

drank and 33% binge drank in the month prior to the survey.



■ Have not had sex ■ Have had sex

Parental Monitoring and Intercourse

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring report that they have **NOT** had sexual intercourse. On the other hand, 50% of teens whose parents practice “very low” or “low” levels of parental monitoring have had sexual intercourse. (See graph above)

Remember: Parents Make a Difference!

What Can a Parent Do?

Are you a good monitor of YOUR teen? Take this Parental Monitoring Quiz to find out. The more questions you answer “yes”, the better for you and your teen. If you answer “no” (or “yes” only some of the time), you will have some ideas of areas where you may want to improve.

- ✚ Do you know who your teen’s friends are?
- ✚ If your teen is late, do they know that you expect them to call?
- ✚ Do you know where your teen is and what he/she is doing:
 - After school? When not in school?
- ✚ Does your teen tell you who they’ll be with before they go out?
- ✚ Do you know where your teen is when he or she goes out at night?
- ✚ Do you know how your teen spends his or her money?
- ✚ Do you know the parents of your teen’s friends?
- ✚ Do you talk with your teen about the plans they have with their friends?
- ✚ Do you know what internet sites you teen visits?

“Parents Make a Difference” is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This series is adapted from the UW-Extension “Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” series, by Huser, et.al. This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County (adapted from Parents Make A Difference...Teens and Parental Monitoring by Schriefer, et. al) and edited by Pam Hobson, UW-Extension Richland County, Jessie Potterton, UW-Extension Lafayette County, Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County, and Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant County. Thanks are extended to the 3,747 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2005 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; Crawford County (608) 326-0223; and Richland County (608) 647-6148. Or visit the website at:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html>.

