



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and Parental Monitoring

January 2003

Research has shown that parents who set consistent rules and expectations for their teens' behavior 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 about what they are doing and who their friends are. This concept can be referred to as parental monitoring.

Examples of Parental Monitoring

In the 2001 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.	4%	6%	18%	72%
If I am going to be home late, I am expected to call my parent(s) to let them know.	5%	7%	15%	73%
I tell my parent(s) whom I'm going out with before I go out.	5%	8%	24%	63%
When I go out at night, my parent(s) know where I am.	4%	9%	24%	63%
My parent(s) know who my friends are.	3%	5%	18%	74%
My parent(s) know the parents of my friends.	5%	13%	32%	50%
I talk to my parent(s) about the plans I have with my friends.	8%	17%	32%	44%
My parent(s) know how I spend my money.	7%	13%	31%	48%

According to the 5,704 7th through 12th graders surveyed, parents in southwest Wisconsin are doing a good job of tracking who their teen's 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 talking with teens about the plans they have with their friends and knowing how teens spend their money.

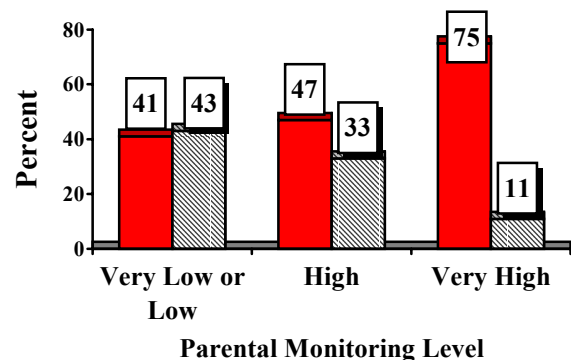
Overall, based on teens' perceptions, 68% of teens (74% of females and 62% of males) have parents who monitor them at a "very high" level and another 24% have parents who practice "high" levels of parental monitoring. Only 8% of students perceived "low" or "very low" levels of parental monitoring (12% of males and 5% 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

Seventy-five percent (75%) of teens whose parents practice "very high" levels of parental monitoring report that they have never tried smoking tobacco and only 11% are current smokers. Overall, 65% of all students surveyed have never tried smoking and 19% of all students currently smoke.

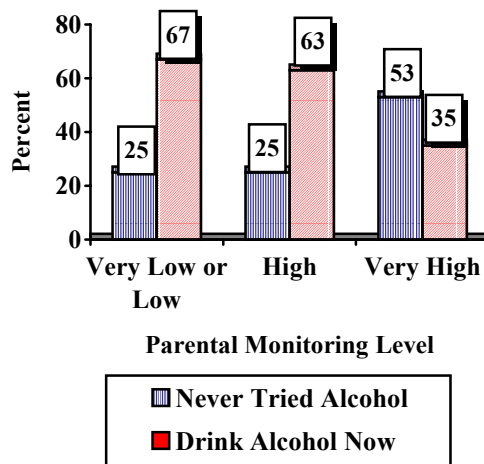


■ Never Tried Smoking Tobacco ■ Currently Smoke Tobacco

Parental Monitoring and Alcohol

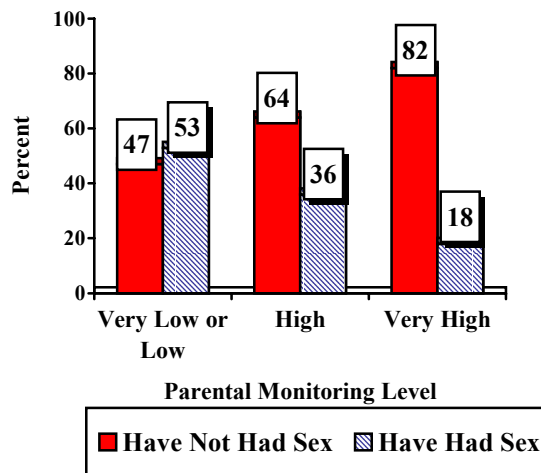
More than half of the teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring report that they have never tried alcohol and only 35% currently drink. Overall, only 44% of students surveyed have not tried alcohol and another 44% also currently drink.

Binge drinking is also reduced with “very high” levels of parental monitoring. Binge drinking is defined as 5 or more drinks at a time. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of all teens surveyed reported binge drinking in the month before the survey while only 17% of those with “very high” parental monitoring binge drank in the month before the survey.



Parental Monitoring and Sexual Intercourse

Eighty-two percent (82%) of teens whose parents practice “very high” levels of parental monitoring report that they have not had sexual intercourse. On the other hand, 53% of teens whose parents practice “very low” or “low” levels of parental monitoring have had sexual intercourse. Of all the students surveyed, 75% have not had sexual intercourse. (Note: The December 2002 issue of *Pediatrics*, the American Academy of Pediatrics scientific journal, cited a study on sexual activity of more than 2000 high school students. Among the respondents who have had sexual intercourse, 91% had last done so in a home setting.)



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 going to be late, does he/she know that you expect him/her to call?*
- *Do you know where your teen is and what he/she is doing after school?*
- *Does your teen tell you who he/she will 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 he/she has with his/her friends?*

“*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. This issue was written by Ruth Schriefer, UW-Extension Iowa County and edited by Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County, Deb Ivey UW-Extension Iowa County and Christina Kenney, UW-Extension Grant County. Thanks are extended to the 5,704 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2001 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/2001/2001surveyresults.html> for further information, or by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391.