



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens and School Codes

September 2002

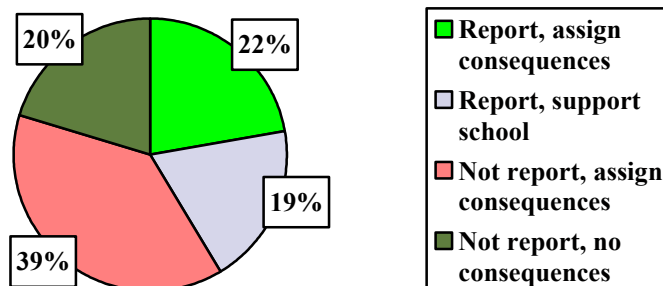
Eighty percent of Southwest Wisconsin teens participate in extra or co-curricular activities and are required by schools to sign a code of conduct. These school codes require the students to conduct themselves as role models. This obligation is established in the form of a contract. By signing the “code”, students agree to live by the rules of the code and parents agree to help their child live up to the “code”.

But what if the teen breaks the code? Should a parent inform the school? Wouldn't that keep their son or daughter from participating in an activity that helps them grow and develop? If a parent assigns consequences at home, isn't that more effective? Tough questions!!!

Parents Make A Difference!

Research from the recent Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) of 5,704 7th to 12th graders shows that teens who believe their parents will report them to school officials for code violations are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs and are less likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse, regardless of whether the teen believes their parents will punish them at home. Unfortunately, the majority of teens in Southwest Wisconsin (58%) believe their parents will not turn them into school officials if they violate a school code.

Violation of School Code and Parental Reporting



In the SWYS, students were asked “*If you violated a school code (behavior, academic, athletic or activity) and your parents found out what would they most likely do?*” As pictured in the above graph:

- ❖ 22% of students said that their parents would report the violation to school officials and would assign consequences at home.
- ❖ 19% of students said that their parents would report the violation to school officials and would support the consequences assigned by the school.
- ❖ 38% of students said that their parents would not report them to school officials but would assign consequences at home.
- ❖ 20% of students said that their parents would not report them to school officials or assign any consequences at home.

It is important to note that the teen responses are based on what the adolescent **perceives** their parent would do in the event that the teen violated a school code and their parents found out. This perception could be based on previous experience with school code violations, parental consistency on enforcing consequences for unacceptable behavior, and communication and parenting styles that have a direct bearing on teen behavior.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

Student responses to the SWYS show that alcohol is the drug most used by teens in southwest Wisconsin. Over half (56%) of teens surveyed say they have tried alcohol and 27% say they binge drank (had more than five drinks on one occasion) in the month previous to the survey. Nearly half of all teens (46%) say they have ridden with a driver who has been drinking in the month previous to the survey.

After alcohol, tobacco is next most used drug among area teens. One-third of females (33%) and 36% of males have tried smoking. One in four males and one in five females report being a current smoker and one in ten 11th and 12th graders report smoking half a pack a day or

more. One in five (19%) teens have tried marijuana and 11% are current users. One in ten (11%) say they currently use caffeine pills. Three percent say they currently use ecstasy.

Sexual Intercourse

One in four teens (25%) report that they have had sexual intercourse. One in five (20%) report that they currently engage in sexual intercourse.

Good News!!!

As the chart on this page shows, students who say their parents would report them to school officials for violating a school code are less likely to use drugs like alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, caffeine pills and ecstasy. They are also less likely to have had sexual intercourse.

Parent Responses to School Code Violation and Teen Behavior

	Binge Drank Past Month	Smoke Tobacco Daily	Tried Marijuana	Have Had Sexual Intercourse
My parents would report me <u>and</u> assign consequences at home.	16%	4%	11%	17%
My parents would report me <u>and</u> support the consequences assigned by the school.	20%	5%	15%	19%
My parents would <u>not</u> report me, but would assign consequences at home.	30%	9%	22%	29%
My parents would <u>not</u> report me or assign consequences at home.	39%	16%	28%	36%

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- ✓ **Does your teen know what you would do** if you found out they violated a school code? How have you communicated this? Have you had a conversation about your response in the event that they violate a school code? Have you talked about why you would or would not report them to school officials?
- ✓ **If your teen thinks you would not turn them in**, does that mean they think it is OK to lie in certain situations? If your teen believes that you are not going to live up to the code you signed, why should they have to live up to it?
- ✓ **How have you dealt with your teen’s transgressions in the past?** Have you been consistently enforcing the consequences? Does your teen know what consequences to expect if he or she breaks a family rule?
- ✓ **Does your teen know what you think is appropriate behavior** for him or her when it comes to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs? Do they know what you think is appropriate dating behavior?

Remember: PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“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 newsletter is adapted from the UW-Extension “Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” Teens and School Codes newsletter which was originally written by Tom Schmitz and Nancy Stoutenborough. This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant and Lafayette County and edited by Ruth Schriefer and 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/parentresources.html> for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Iowa County (608) 935-0391.