

# Helping Teens Stay Healthy and Safe

## Health Care, Birth Control & **CONFIDENTIAL** Services

Teen birth rates have steadily declined over the past decade to an all-time low in the United States. Much of this decline is attributed to better use of contraception.

Confidential contraceptive services are an essential part of comprehensive health care and pregnancy prevention for teens. Some states in the U.S. do not have explicit laws authorizing minors to consent for contraceptive services, causing confusion among teens, parents, and health care providers.

In 2005, Healthy Teen Network (HTN) and the Center for Adolescent Health & the Law (CAHL) – with generous support from the John Merck Fund, Rhode Island Foundation, and Prentiss Fund – investigated how the provision of confidential contraceptive services to adolescents is affected when a state's laws are unclear.

The project team interviewed several health care providers, clinic managers, Title X administrators, and others in affected states. These key informants reinforced our impression that there is confusion about minors' access to confidential contraceptive services among all who are involved – administrators, clinical care providers, clinic support staff, teens, and parents. Administrators and clinical care providers in the states we investigated are especially unsure about what services they can offer without excessive risk.

In an effort to reduce confusion and increase access to confidential services for teens, **HTN and CAHL provide you with the following three resources:**

- **FOR PROVIDERS** – Discusses rationales for providing confidential contraceptive services to teens, support that exists in the policies of health care professional organizations, and ways that state and federal laws can be useful. A longer more detailed document addressing these issues for providers is available at [www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org](http://www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org) and [www.cahl.org](http://www.cahl.org).
- **FOR TEENS** – Helps teens understand what confidential services means and lets teens know what they can access on their own.
- **FOR PARENTS** – Helps parents understand why supporting teens' access to confidential services is consistent with good parenting.

We hope you will find these materials helpful and will disseminate them broadly so you can join Healthy Teen Network and the Center for Adolescent Health & the Law in **helping teens stay healthy and safe.**



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**Healthy Teen Network**  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES  
OF TEENS AND YOUNG FAMILIES

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