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**KIDS READY TO TALK ABOUT TODAY'S TOUGH ISSUES
BEFORE THEIR PARENTS ARE:
SEX, AIDS, VIOLENCE, AND DRUGS/ALCOHOL**

*New National Survey Finds Kids In Families Who Talk Openly About Sex and Relationships
More Likely to Say Would Turn to Parent First if Faced with Crisis*

The "big talk" is bigger than ever with kids wanting to know much more from their parents than just the "birds-and-the-bees." A [new survey of parents and kids ages 10-15](#) conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and [Children Now](#), as part of a national initiative called [Talking With Kids About Tough Issues](#), finds that many families are still waiting too long and not talking enough when it comes to what their kids say they need to know.

What may surprise many parents is that the issues they are not talking about—as well as even some they feel they have already talked about—are what their kids want to know more about. High on a list of topics **10-12 year olds** say they *personally* want more information about are:

- How to protect against HIV/AIDS (50% of kids want more information);
- What to do if someone brings a gun to school (50% of kids want more information);
- How to handle pressure to have sex (44% of kids want more information);
- How to know when you are ready to have sex (43% of kids want more information); and
- How alcohol and drugs might affect decisions to have sex (43% of kids want more information).

"The Big Talk(s)" About Today's Tough Issues

When parents sit down today with their children to have the "big talk" the subject matter usually covers topics their own parents never imagined. (And, for that matter, it shouldn't just be a single conversation, say experts). At least three out of four parents of 10-12 year olds say they have talked with their pre-teen about drugs or alcohol (90%); violence (85%); drinking and driving (82%); AIDS (78%); and how girls get pregnant (73%).

But, many **parents of 10-12 year olds** are steering clear of some of the more difficult conversations about sex, including:

- How to handle peer pressure to have sex (46% of parents have not discussed);
- How to know when you are ready to have sex (50% of parents have not discussed);
- How alcohol and drugs might affect decisions to have sex (46% of parents have not discussed); and
- How to prevent pregnancy and STDs (62% of parents have not discussed).

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“The ‘big talk’ isn’t what it used to be. It now needs to be ‘supersized,’” said Matt James, Senior Vice President, Kaiser Family Foundation. “When parents today talk with their kids about tough issues that means covering the basics, plus a whole lot more.”

Experts say that kids benefit when their parents talk early and often with them about "tough issues." For the 57% of parents of 10-15 year olds who have talked openly with their children about sex, including relationships and becoming sexually active, there is some encouraging news.

The survey found their kids were more likely than those whose parents had not talked with them to report going first to a parent ...

- If they were dealing with pressure to have sex (72% of 10-15 year olds who talked with their parents vs. 57% who did not);
- If they were thinking about having sex (67% of 10-15 year olds who talked with their parents vs. 51% who did not); and
- If they were worried about being or having gotten someone pregnant (66% of 13-15 year olds who talked with their parents vs. 49% who did not).

The Competition

According to the survey, pre-teens name their mothers as one of their top sources when it comes to sex, AIDS, violence, drugs and alcohol. But, even among 10-12 year olds, television/movies are already tied with moms and schools/teachers as a place where kids say they get "a lot" of their information (all named by 38%). Fathers come in a close second (34%). When kids enter the teen years, the competition heats up with friends (64%) and television/movies (61%) becoming much more dominant influences in their lives. Schools and teachers rank third (44%) and mothers are fifth (38%), just below the Internet (39%).

"Parents have a powerful window of opportunity if they talk with their children early and often," said Lois Salisbury, President, Children Now. "The *Talking With Kids About Tough Issues* campaign encourages parents to use everyday activities, including TV programs, events at school and issues with friends, as talk opportunities."

The [questionnaire and national toplines](#) are available in PDF. A [chart pack](#) summarizing the findings is available in HTML.

The Talking With Kids About Tough Issues Campaign

This survey was conducted as part of *Talking With Kids About Tough Issues*, a national campaign to support parents by the Kaiser Family Foundation, a national independent health care philanthropy (not associated with Kaiser Permanente), and Children Now, a non-partisan voice for America's children. A special report on the survey results appears in the April 1st issue of *Family Circle*, which contributed to the development of the survey. *Talking With Kids About Tough Issues* encourages and helps parents talk with their kids earlier and more often about topics such as sex, AIDS, violence, alcohol and drugs.

The campaign provides direct assistance to parents with free booklets and other resources that are available by calling 1-800-CHILD 44, or online at <http://www.talkingwithkids.org>. A new series of public service messages encouraging family talks, produced by J. Walter Thompson New York under an Ad Council initiative, will begin airing around the country in March. Additionally, the April 1st issue of *Family Circle* includes an 8-page *Talking With Kids* booklet as a pull-out for its readers.

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