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## Do U.S. Family Planning Clinics Encourage Parent-Child Communication? Findings from an Exploratory Survey

By Rachel K. Jones

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**CONTEXT:** Clinics that receive Title X funding have a mandate to encourage parent-child communication for minors seeking family planning services. Little is known about the programs and practices that clinics have adopted to achieve this goal, or whether clinics not receiving Title X funds encourage family participation.

**METHODS:** As part of a larger project examining parental engagement among adolescents using family planning clinics, 81 clinics that served 200 or more adolescent contraceptive clients in 2001 completed a questionnaire containing closed- and open-ended items. Topic areas included clinic counseling and policies regarding clients younger than 18, activities to improve parent-child communication and community relations. Frequency distributions were calculated for the prevalence of activities, and cross-tabulations were used to compare prevalence by clinic characteristics.

**RESULTS:** Every clinic engaged in at least one activity to promote parent-child communication, and nine in 10 offered multiple activities. Most of the clinics used counseling sessions to talk to adolescent clients about the importance of discussing sexual health issues with parents (73–94%, depending on the reason for the visit). More than eight in 10 clinics (84%) distributed pamphlets on how to talk about these issues. A substantial minority (43%) offered or referred interested individuals to educational programs designed to improve communication. Some of these exploratory findings reflect the prevalence of activities among all U.S. family planning clinics that serve adolescent clients.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Evaluation and expansion of clinic efforts to promote voluntary communication about sexual health issues between parents and children could help encourage family participation.

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