

MENTAL HEALTH

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With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health.

www.familyvoices.org and
www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org.

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To Sleep, Or Maybe to Dream—Teenagers and Sleep

A report from the National Sleep Foundation, *Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns: Research Report and Resource Guide*, describes what many parents of teens have noticed: their teens stay up later, get up later, and are sleepier in the day. This is a typical pattern, but with potentially serious consequences.

- Increased risk of unintentional injuries and death. Drowsiness and fatigue in drivers 25 and younger caused more than 55% of fall-asleep crashes in North Carolina alone.
- Low grades and poor school performance. While lack of sleep has not been shown to cause poor grades, teens who are struggling at school report later bedtimes and more irregular sleep schedules.
- Negative moods. Sleepy teens are more likely to feel depressed, angry, or fearful.
- Increased likelihood of stimulant use. Sleepy teens are more likely to use caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and other substances to deal with effects of poor sleep.

Sleep-Friendly Schools—Just a Dream or a Needed Reality?

Because the changes in normal sleep behavior are at least partly biological for a teen, some schools are making changes to

help sleepy teens perform better in and out of school. Positive ways schools can influence teen sleep patterns include:

- Educate teachers, school nurses, and other staff about teen sleep needs and patterns, as well as the signs of sleep loss. Signs include: difficulty waking in the morning; irritability later in the day; falling asleep spontaneously during quiet times of day; and sleeping for extra long periods on the weekends.
- Educate teens about the benefits of sleep and the consequences of too little sleep. Include sleep lessons in biology and health classes, and driver's education courses.
- Change the school schedule. Some high schools start classes after 9am, with positive results. This puts teens in class during times of day when they are naturally more alert. Students report feeling better, and schools report fewer behavior problems.

To read more go to: www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/sleep_and_teens_report1.pdf

