

Child Adolescent Sexual Development: Infant and Preschool

Grades 11 and 12, Lesson #2

Time Needed

One class period

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Explain at least three non-verbal ways in which parents influence their children's sexual development.
2. Begin to articulate messages about sexuality that he or she would like to communicate to his or her children.
3. Distinguish between toddlers' sexual behaviors which are common and developmentally normal and those that could warrant concern.

Agenda

1. Explain the lesson's relevance and purpose.
2. Introduce the concepts of verbal and non-verbal, conscious and unconscious sexuality education in families.
3. Use *Parents-as-Sex-Educators Transparencies 1-4* and an individualized drawing exercise to help students begin to articulate messages for their own children.
4. Discuss the exercise.
5. In pairs, have students practice applying the concepts, through discussion of up to eight parent/child scenarios.
6. Use Reference Sheet for closure and resources.

Materials Needed

One per student of ...

Parents-as-Sex-Educators Reference Sheet *

One copy of ...

Parents-as-Sex-Educators Transparencies 1-5 **

Several per student of ...

crayons

paper, 8.5 x11" sheets, unlined (several per student)

* **IMPORTANT:** If you live outside the Seattle area, compile a new last page for the *Parents-as-Sex-Educators Reference Sheet* with your local resources *before photocopying*. We have provided a master page for your convenience.

** Alternately, beginning in late 2006, all FLASH transparencies will be available as PowerPoint files on the FLASH web site: www.metrokc.gov/health/famplan/flash

Activities

1. Explain the lesson's purpose and relevance:

Our sexuality was a part of us from the moment of fertilization ... some aspects of it, anyway, like our gender (whether we are male or female). Some other aspects of our sexuality, though not programmed from fertilization, began to form at birth ... as soon as our parents began to cuddle, feed and speak to us.

Many of you will be parents some day; some of you may be already. Those of you who don't ever become biological parents may still find yourselves in parenting roles ... as teachers or day care workers; official or unofficial aunts or uncles; step, foster or adoptive parents and so forth. So most of you will be providing some sort of sexuality education to an infant, toddler or child. Whether you intend to or not, you will be influencing that child's feelings and beliefs about his or her body, about his or herself as a male or female, about love and trust and affection, and so forth.

Today, we are going to explore the role of parents as sexuality educators ... what you can do to help the children you love to grow up to be sexually healthy. We will also examine normal child sexual development ... what to expect (from birth to about age six).

Remember that, when I say "parent" for the rest of the period, I do not mean just biological parent. I mean any adult in a loving, caretaker-type relationship with a child. I am assuming that most of you will have some children you love in your lives; I am not assuming you will all necessarily become biological parents.

2. To demonstrate that sexuality education is a constant process, which may not even be conscious or verbal, ask for a show of hands, or for people to stand up, in response to each of the following questions:

1. *How many of you expect to tell your children you love them?*
2. *How many expect to ever cuddle with them or kiss them goodnight?*
3. *How many of the girls in the room think you might choose to breastfeed if you had a biological child?*
4. *How many of you, male or female, think you will ever hold a child while you are bottle-feeding him or her?*
5. *How many think you will ever show affection to another adult in your child's presence?*
6. *How many think you will probably prefer not to be affectionate in front of them?*
7. *How many of you will probably close the bedroom or bathroom door when company is present?*
8. *How many think you might ever bathe, shave, put on make-up or get dressed in front of your child?*

Discuss the concept that anybody who raised her/his hand for any of these questions will be providing sexuality education. Sexuality education is not always verbal. Non-verbal messages to the child, including modeling, are some of the most powerful messages ... whether or not the "sending" adult even realizes that she or he is teaching.

However, perhaps parents are more likely to send the messages they want to send, if they put a little conscious thought into it. That's what this lesson can help with:

- thinking about what things you would **like** to communicate to a child you loved, and
 - considering how best to communicate those things.
3. Pass out crayons and paper. Explain that people will have about five minutes to draw a picture with a caption, illustrating one of the most important things they hope to communicate to their children about some aspect of sexuality. Let them know that, after they've drawn their idea, they will be asked to explain it. Before they start, show them ***Parents-as-Sex-Educators Transparencies 1 through 4*** to give them examples and a range of issues about which they may want to communicate. Some people will have time to illustrate more than one important idea (on separate pieces of paper), but everyone should do at least one.

NOTE: These are not suggested values of the **F.L.A.S.H.** curriculum. They are simply *examples* of what *might* be a student's value.

4. Have people put their illustrations on their desks (face down, if they wish to "pass" on this part of the exercise). Then everyone spend four minutes wandering around the classroom looking at other people's "Important Ideas". Debrief when the class is seated again, by asking,

"Without mentioning who said what, were there any messages anyone found particularly surprising? Can you share with us in a tactful, respectful way, any messages you might have found disturbing? touching? offensive? affirming?"

In response to any of these questions, ask people to tell one another why they reacted as they did.

Making clear that you are not criticizing, or trying to put anyone in a defensive posture, but simply challenging them to articulate their beliefs, you may also ask volunteers to:

- explain **why** they chose the particular idea they chose,
- whether they think their idea can be communicated best through non-verbal means (cuddling the child, modeling how men should act, etc.) or through verbal means (reading, talking), and
- at what age they think they should bring it up, if the child hasn't brought it up yet.

Depending upon the group, this debriefing may take two to twenty minutes.

5. Have people choose a partner for the next exercise. They should decide who will be "person A" and who will be "person B". Explain that, one at a time, you will read various scenarios ... situations that a parent might encounter. When necessary, you will also offer some information about normal development. Person A will respond to the first scenario, as if he or she were the parent. **He or she must speak for exactly one and a half minutes** about

(put Transparency 5 on the screen as you list these steps):

- how he or she might feel as the parent in this situation,
- what thing(s) he or she would want the child to learn from this situation,
- what he or she, as a parent, might do or say to communicate that thing.

Then, Person B may respond ... sharing his or her own emotional reaction to the scenario and agreeing or disagreeing with what Person A wants the child to learn and how best to teach it. Both persons can discuss the issue for, perhaps, two or three minutes. Use your judgment regarding whether the dyads are staying “on task” and when it is time to move on.

It will be Person B’s turn to go first on the next scenario. Do as many of the following as you have time for (in any order you choose):

SCENARIO ONE¹

When you bathe your 18-month old son, washing his penis makes him have an erection.

Incidentally, I should contribute this fact: his response is normal. That is, it is to be expected if his sexual response system is functioning as it should, although not every infant will have the same response. But the fact that it is not something to worry about doesn’t mean that you must feel a particular way.

NOTE: Point to each question on the Transparency as you continue:

1. *Think about how you would **feel**.*
2. *Think about **what you want him to learn** about bodies, touching, sexual feelings, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want him to learn, **what will you do?** Will you ignore the erection? Will you comment on it? Will you stop bathing him and ask his other parent to do it, instead? What exactly will you do?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person A.

SCENARIO TWO

Your 3-year old daughter asks to take a shower with you now and then.

Incidentally, I should contribute this fact: her request is developmentally normal. That is, it is to be expected that she is curious about bodies (adult, child, male, female). But the

¹ Most of these eight scenarios were adapted, with permission, from ***Sexuality Education in Beginning Families***, by Marian Williams, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Copyright 1986.

fact that it is not something to worry about doesn't mean that you must feel a particular way.

1. *Think about how you would feel.*
2. *Think about what you want her to learn about bodies, nudity, what is or isn't private in your family, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want her to learn, will you invite her to join you or not? Will you explain why you are inviting her or turning her down? If you have a partner of the other gender, would you want him or her to let your three-year old join in a shower or not?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person B.

SCENARIO THREE

Your four year old asks, "How does the baby get into the mother?"

Again, a developmentally normal question. He or she is trying to understand life.

1. *Think about how you would feel.*
2. *Think about what you want him or her to learn about pregnancy, sex, intercourse, family, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want him or her to learn, what will you say? Will you keep it simple or go into detail? Will you get a book to read together or wait? What will you say and do?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person A.

SCENARIO FOUR

Your five year old has never asked any questions about sexuality.

This child is also behaving "normally" in not asking questions. Some children never do. That doesn't necessarily mean they aren't curious. It may mean you have sent out subtle signals that said, "I'm too busy for your questions. Don't bother me." or "Sex is a no-no. We don't talk about it in our family." Or it may be that the child is just a private person. Or maybe there haven't been many natural opportunities to bring things up lately (there haven't been any pregnancies among your family and friends, no flashers in the news, no slang words at kindergarten this year, no love stories on TV).

1. *Think about how you would feel when you realized your five year old hadn't brought up any sexuality issues.*
2. *Think about what you want him or her to learn about sexuality, about talking with you, etc.*

3. *Given how you feel, and what you want him or her to learn, what will you say or do? If you'll just wait, when will you wait until and then what will you do or say? If you'll do or say something now, what might it be?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person B.

SCENARIO FIVE

You walk in on your five year old and the four year old neighbor playing "doctor" and examining one another's genitals.

This is developmentally normal. They may or may not be feeling sexual feelings. They may be curious about whether other kids of their own gender look like they do, or about how kids of the other gender look. If one were much older than the other, or if one were developmentally disabled, there might well be exploitation involved (pressure, power games). Given that they are close in age, this is probably not the case, though it doesn't hurt to check it out.. But the fact that it is not something to worry about doesn't mean that you must feel a particular way.

1. *Think about how you would feel and whether the children's genders would make any difference. Would your relationship with the neighbor family make any difference in your feelings?*
2. *Think about what you want your child to learn about his or her own and other people's bodies, about touch, privacy, sexual response, about other people's feelings and beliefs, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want your child to learn, what will you say or do? Will you ignore it? If so, until when? Then what will you say or do? If you don't ignore it, what will you do or say?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person A.

SCENARIO SIX

Your four year old constantly rubs his or her genitals while the family watches TV together.

This is very common at this age. It is most likely masturbation, for comfort and stress-relief (like a security blanket) or for pleasure. If the child does this at other times, too, it could also be a sign that there was an infection or a sexual abuse problem, but probably not, if the child only does it at TV time. Still, the fact that it is not something to worry about doesn't mean that you must feel a particular way.

1. *Think about how you would feel and whether the feelings of others in your household would affect how you felt.*

2. *Think about what you want your child to learn about his or her body, touch, masturbation, privacy, sexual response, about other people's feelings and beliefs, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want your child to learn, what will you say or do? Will you ignore it? If so, until when? Then what will you say or do? If you don't ignore it, what will you do or say?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person B.

SCENARIO SEVEN

Your four year old wanders into your bedroom while you and your partner are making love.

This does happen. The child may want a glass of water or be waking from a bad dream. Or he or she may have heard noises and been curious or scared.

1. *Think about how you would feel.*
2. *Think about what you want your child to learn about love, sex, sexual intercourse, privacy, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want your child to learn, what will you say or do at that moment? What will you say or do in a half an hour or tomorrow?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person A.

SCENARIO EIGHT

Your three year old son likes to dress up in his mother's clothes and jewelry or your three year old daughter likes to wear her father's football jersey and cleats.

This is developmentally normal behavior. That is, it is common and is not necessarily any reflection of the child's gender identity, or his or her gender orientation, or even of his or her future role choices. It usually reflects either a child's attachment to the parent of the other gender or simple imagination (not unlike making believe that one is a pirate, a clown or an elephant). But the fact that it is not something to worry about doesn't mean that you must feel a particular way.

1. *Think about how you would feel and whether the gender of the child would make a difference in your feelings.*
2. *Think about what you want your child to learn about men and women, about his or her own gender identity and role and about yours and other people's, etc.*
3. *Given how you feel, and what you want your child to learn, what will you say or do at the moment the child shows up in these play clothes? What will you say or do in a half an hour or tomorrow?*

Let me read the scenario for you once more ... Go. You have a minute and a half, Person B.

6. Hand out and take turns reading aloud the **Parents-as-Sex-Educators Reference Sheet**. It will summarize the most important facts for (future) parents to know about child sexual development (what is normal, what may be signs for concern), and provide some tips and resources.

If your class can be depended upon to do their homework, and if they are all skilled readers, reading the **Reference Sheet** can be a homework assignment ... to allow more time for activity #5, above. However, the information contained in the **Reference Sheet** is important. Have it read aloud in class, if there is any doubt regarding students' likelihood of doing homework.

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Transparency 1

**What very important idea do you
want to communicate to your
child about...**

Pregnancy, Birth

Sexual Hygiene

Bodies

Talking With You

Sex

Men, Boys

Affection

Women, Girls

Love

Nudity

Birth Control

Masturbation

Puberty

STDs, AIDS

Sexual Intercourse

Friendship

Pre-marital Sex

Sexual Abuse

Words, Slang

Families

Homo/Hetero/Bisexuality

Him or Herself

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Transparency 2



TOPIC: Him or Herself

IMPORTANT IDEA:

“You are very loveable.”

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Transparency 3



TOPIC: Masturbation
IMPORTANT IDEA:
“I hope you will not masturbate.”

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Transparency 4



TOPIC: Sexual Intercourse
IMPORTANT IDEA:

**“Your parents enjoy sex with one another.
Sex is a wonderful gift”**

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Transparency 5

1.

How might I feel as the parent in this situation?

2.

What thing(s) would I want my child to learn from this situation?

3.

What could I do or say to communicate those things?

Parents-As-Sex-Educators Reference Sheet

What is “normal”?

What does the word mean? Different things. For our purposes, it means “common...something that children of a certain age often do, for reasons that have to do with healthy sexual development.”

We are not using the word normal to equal “right”. Just because a behavior is normal for children of a certain age, that doesn’t mean it must be acceptable in your family. It just means the behavior is common, and that is not usually a sign of a deeper problem. It means it is not a cause for worry... that you don’t need to consult a doctor or expert, or try to change the child’s behavior, unless it conflicts with your family’s values or makes you very uncomfortable.

What do parents need to know about child sexual development? **A FEW NORMAL BEHAVIORS**

1. All babies get erections and most masturbate.

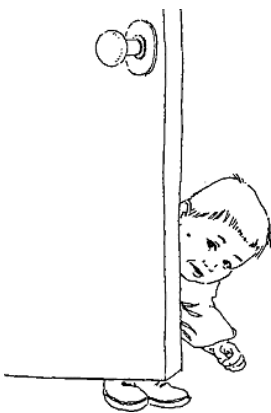
Babies are born with the ability to feel pleasure in their genitals. Male children of all ages will have erections occasionally. Female children will also have erections (of the clitoris) and their vaginas will lubricate. Babies will touch and play with their genitals, just as they do with everything else in their world.



2. Most babies go through a shy period.

Between about 6 months and one year of age, they may be fearful of strangers. This is nothing to worry about. They just need the safety of people they know.

3. All toddlers show an interest in other people’s bathroom behavior.



It is perfectly normal for a one- to three-year-old to want to watch and talk about how others use the toilet. This interest is one sign that a child is getting ready to be “toilet trained”. Girls may imitate Daddy’s bathroom behavior (if they live with Daddy) by trying to stand up to urinate. Many children will ask people whether they stand or sit. At two or three years old, most children have enough muscle control (and interest), to begin toilet training. It’s best to let the child set the pace.

4. Most children are curious about pregnancy and birth.

It is common for pre-schoolers to ask where babies come from. They need simple, honest answers to their questions.

5. Almost all pre-schoolers are curious about bodies.

Up to age three or four, many will show a great interest in watching their family members dress, shave, bathe, and shower. Many children want to bathe or shower with parents as toddlers, and with brothers and sisters for a few more years. It is also very common for small children to play “show me” games with their peers. As long as they are about the same age, and neither seems to have talked the other into it, it is probably perfectly healthy.



POSSIBLE SIGNS FOR CONCERN IN PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN When to pay special attention...



- A. A child is suddenly reluctant to go to a particular place or to be with a particular person.
- B. The child wants to kiss a parent with an open mouth, even after the parent has said he or she wasn't interested.
- C. A child who always slept through the night becomes fearful of sleeping alone, suddenly needs a nightlight, begins having nightmares, or starts wetting the bed.
- D. The child returns to younger, more baby-like behavior.

This is a common, healthy response to stress, for instance after the birth of a baby brother or sister. But if there is no obvious reason like that for the change, it might be a sign for concern.

A child loses his or her appetite, or has a sudden increase in appetite.

By itself this might not be a sign for concern. But coupled with other sudden changes, it is worth paying attention to.



- F. A child gets involved in sex play with another child who is more than a year older or younger, or one child seems to have pushed or forced the other into it.

As long as they are the same age, and both seem to have chosen it, it is probably simply a sign of curiosity and not a cause for worry. But if there is a big difference in maturity or power, it can be a serious problem.



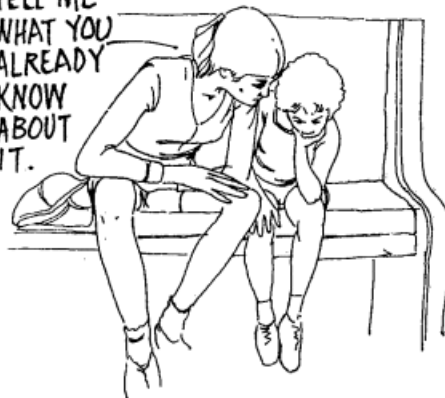
FIFTEEN TIPS TO REMEMBER:

1. Be honest.
2. Use words the child can understand.
3. Use soft, playful “family words” for sexual issues and body parts, if you like, some of the time.
4. Be sure to use standard, accurate “adult words” for sexual issues and body parts some of the time.
5. Show your children that:
 - you like their curiosity and enjoy answering their questions (about other issues, too not just sex).
 - you’ll be patient. It’s OK to ask the same thing again later.
 - they can trust you and come to you even when they make mistakes.
 - you will talk about sexual issues even when you feel awkward, because they deserve it.
6. Share not only information, but also your feelings and values.
7. Listen. Let your children share their knowledge, feelings and values with you, too.

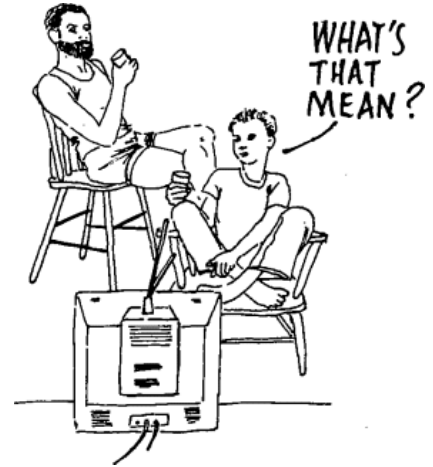
NOW, LET'S
WASH YOUR
PENIS.



WELL,
TELL ME
WHAT YOU
ALREADY
KNOW
ABOUT
IT.



8. Teach them about sexual exploitation and diseases just as you would about other dangers.
9. Remember to teach not only the dangers of touch and sex, but also their joys.
10. Start conversations. Remember that some children never ask.
11. Read books aloud together about sexual issues.



12. Use every day life to trigger talking: TV show, a pregnant aunt, a man hugging his child in the store, a woman driving the bus, even a condom on the playground.

13. Help your children prepare for important life changes. Don't wait until after the birth of a brother or sister, or until after the child's first "wet dream" or period, to talk about it. Don't wait for the child to overhear grownups talking about Uncle's having AIDS, or to hear of it from another child.



14. **Don't worry about saying "too much".**

If it's too complex, your child will just be bored, not hurt.

It only hurts:

1. if it is dishonest, OR
2. if it teaches things your family disagrees with (e.g., that bodies are nasty, that sex is dirty, that men or women are bad, etc.), AND
3. you don't talk about what you do believe.

15. **Don't worry about not knowing all the facts.**

You can look up facts together!

What matters is that you talk, especially about things the child can't look up or learn in school:

your feelings,
 your beliefs,
 and why you feel and believe the way you do.

Can parents of school-aged children count on the schools to provide “Sex Ed” for them?

NO. For two reasons:

1. Most schools provide very few hours of sexuality education.

They often teach nothing, except perhaps about sexual abuse, in kindergarten through fourth grade. The average time spent on “sex ed” in grades five through twelve in most districts is fewer than four hours a year. In contrast, your child’s friends will provide hours and hours of “sex ed” on the bus and the playground. Your child will receive hundreds, maybe thousands, of hours of “sex ed” from TV. Then, there’s “sex ed” in movies, on the radio, on bathroom walls. Do you want the few hours the school provides to be the only alternative to these other sources of “facts”?

2. The school can only do so much.

It can teach facts. And it can encourage your child to talk with you. It can even teach certain values . those that almost all families agree upon. (For instance that adults should not have sex with children.) But a public school can’t teach values about controversial issues (where families disagree about what’s right). No one else but you is able to teach your values and your feelings about these issues.

Where can a parent turn for help?

- A. Some good **BOOKS** and **WEB SITES** about family life and sexual health for **YOU** as future Parents include...
 - ***All About Sex: A Family Resource on Sex and Sexuality***, Moglia and Knowles, Eds.
 - The ***Families Are Talking (La familia habla)*** newsletters, free at www.siecus.org/pubs/pubs0004.html
 - ***Family Connections: A Guidebook for Parents Of Children*** free at www.fhcinc.org
 - ***Everything You Never Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex, but Were Afraid They'd Ask: The Secrets to Surviving Your Child's Sexual Development from Birth to the Teens***, Richardson and Schuster
 - ***From Diapers To Dating: A Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children***, Haffner
 - ***Sex and Sensibility: The Thinking Parent's Guide to Talking Sense About Sex***, Roffman
 - ***Sexuality: Your Sons and Daughters With Intellectual Disabilities***, Schwier and Hingsburger
 - ***Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Sex and Character***, Schwartz and Cappello
 - ***Why Don't You tell Them I'm a Boy? Raising a Gender-Nonconforming Child***, Dillon, free at www.safeschoolscoalition.org/whydontyoutellthem.pdf

- B. A few good **READ-TOGETHER BOOKS** about family life and sexual health for **PARENTS AND CHILDREN** (ages one to five) include.

ABC: A Family Alphabet Book, Combs and Keane

Are You a Boy or a Girl? Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, go to:
www3.sympatico.ca/equity.greendragonpress/equity.html

Bellybuttons Are Navels, Schoen

The Daddy Book, Parr

Daddy's Roommate, Willhoite

Did the Sun Shine Before You Were Born?: A Sexuality Education Primer, Gordon and Gordon

Esta Bien Ser Diferente, Parr and Rubio

The Family Book, Parr

The Feelings Book, Parr

Happy Birth Day! Harris

Hello Benny!: What It's Like to Be a Baby (Growing Up Stories), Harris

Hi New Baby! Harris

How Was I Born? Nilsson and Swanberg

How You Were Born? Cole

Is That Your Sister? Bunin and Bunin

Is Your Family Like Mine? Abramchik

It's Okay to be Different, Parr

It's So Amazing: A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies And Families, Harris

Meggie Moon, Baguley

The Mommy Book, Parr

Our New Baby, Lewison

The Okay Book, Parr

So That's How I Was Born! Brooks

A Very Touching Book, Hindman

What's the Big Secret? Talking About Sex with Girls and Boys, Brown and Brown

When Grown-ups Fall in Love, Edmonds

NOTE: Before reading any books aloud with your child, we suggest reading them yourself. Think about how well they reflect your family's values. Think about the needs of your particular child.

- C. Some **COMMUNITY AGENCIES** can provide parents with information, advice and/or classes on “how to talk with your children about sexuality.”

I. **Look in the yellow pages under:**

“Youth Services, Organizations and Centers”

“Social Service Organizations”

“Family Service Organizations”

II. **If you belong to a church, synagogue, mosque or temple, call the regional office to see if they offer classes or workshops for parents, or for parents and children TOGETHER.**

III. In the Seattle area, parents can call:

AIDS Hotline, Seattle-King County Public Health	205-7837
Campfire USA, Puget Sound Offices.....	461-8550
Great Starts	789-0883
Children’s Hospital, Resource Line.....	987-2500
TDD	987-2223
Community Information Line.....	211
King County Sexual Assault Resource Center	425-226-5062
Family Planning Program, Seattle-King County Public Health	296-4673
Four-H Program.....	205-3100
Girls Incorporated of Puget Sound	568-7850
Girl Scouts, Totem Council Office.....	633-5600
Library Information Lines, Seattle	386-4636
TDD	386-4697
King County	425-462-9600
Parent Trust for Washington Children.....	233-0156 x227
Parent Place.....	364-9933
Family Help Line.....	233-0139
Program for Early Parent Support	547-8570
Ryther Child Center	525-5050
Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities	323-1768
Facts of Life Line, Planned Parenthood.....	328-7711

III. In our area, parents can call: