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Introduction

Homecoming dances, football games, drama club, driver's licenses, prom, going off to college. Developing your own voice, figuring out who you are and what you want to be, learning to express your own unique opinion. These are just a few of the exciting experiences during the teen years.

Many teens have questions along the way, and it can be hard to figure out who can answer these questions. Some questions are about social issues and some are about legal issues. Whatever the topic might be, having this information can help either prevent a serious condition or help you grow and be the very best you can be.

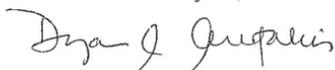
After many years of working with teenagers, parents and other adults who asked similar questions about teen health issues, we realized there was a lack of information in the community. Shared misinformation sometimes led to negative consequences. The University of Virginia Teen Health Center and the Legal Aid Justice Center teamed up to review the questions we were frequently asked and came up with the answers, based on Virginia law in effect in 2009. The result is this booklet.

If you are reading this and are not in Virginia or moving out of Virginia, many of these laws will be different, so please remember this is a guide specific to Virginia issues and laws. Keep in mind that legal situations can be quite unique in certain circumstances, so this guide is for information. If you need legal advice, please contact your local legal aid office (find them at www.valegalaid.org). We assure you that we made every effort to describe situations and corresponding laws in the most accurate way.

We would hope that all teens would rely on their parents for health care information and advice. And we know your parents would feel the same way. Parents have experience and knowledge that would be really valuable to you. And they care about you tremendously. Sometimes teens are reluctant to go to their parents at first, but perhaps an adult family member or family friend would be a good resource for you. Or a teacher, your church leader, or another trustworthy adult. We can't tell you who would be the best resource for you, but **we urge you to include your parents** or legal guardians in these important lifetime decisions.

We appreciate your thoughts and feedback. Mostly we hope that this booklet helps you navigate the teen years so that you become a happy and healthy adult—it will be happening in no time at all!

Best of luck to you,



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Publication revised October, 2011

questions
answers
feedback
law
information
virginia
teen health
thoughts

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We'd like to thank the many people who made this project possible: the nurse who came up with this idea, the law students who helped research these issues, the teens who reviewed our work and the lawyers who met with us. Special thanks to Sonjia Smith, who funded this project, and Myra Hiott Chapman, who researched and cited the relevant laws.

WHO MAKES MEDICAL DECISIONS FOR TEENS?

What is informed consent?

Talking about health care, *informed consent* means that you understand the risks and benefits of a medical decision, and then make a decision. Not everyone can give informed consent. Someone cannot give consent if the law does not consider him or her legally capable of making decisions, nor can someone give informed consent if he or she has not received all of the important information regarding the decision.¹

Here's a more formal definition: Informed consent is voluntary agreement or consent to some act or purpose, with full knowledge of the risks involved and alternatives, given by a competent person.

Can I consent to my own medical care?

Sometimes. In Virginia, any person who is under the age of 18 is a minor. There are a few exceptions, but for the purposes of this booklet, the law considers a person an adult when he or she becomes 18 years of age.² Usually, minors can't give consent for medical care; their parents need to consent for them.

When can I consent to my own medical care?

If you're a minor (under 18) you can get some medical care without parental consent:

- Testing for a sexually transmitted disease (STD).³
- Medical services required for birth control, pregnancy or family planning (except sterilization).⁴
- If married (or previously married), medical or surgical treatment (except sterilization).⁵

- If pregnant, medical or surgical treatment for herself or the child if related to the delivery of the child. After delivery, the law considers the mother an adult for the purpose of consenting to medical or surgical treatment for the child.⁶

The law does *not* consider a minor an adult for the purpose of consenting to an abortion.⁷

What if I have an emergency? What counts as an emergency?

Some laws make exceptions for emergencies. For example, a doctor can perform surgery on a minor without parental consent in a true medical emergency. In that situation, a medical emergency is a condition, according to the doctor's best judgment, that necessitates immediate treatment so that death or serious and permanent damage to a person's body does not result.⁸

What if I don't live with my parents?

Living apart from your parents does not necessarily mean that you have the same legal rights as an adult. In some circumstances a court may emancipate a minor from his or her parents. If emancipated, a minor can consent to medical, dental or psychiatric care without parental consent or knowledge.⁹ You have to go to court to become emancipated, even if you don't live with your parents.

How do I become emancipated?

To become emancipated, you need to go to court. It is not something that judges grant without a good reason. To qualify for emancipation, a judge must find that you are at least 16 years of age and

- that you are or were married; or
- that you are on active duty with any of the armed forces; or

treatment
trustworthy
adult
consequences
minor
consent

- that you are willing and financially able, with the consent of your parents, to live apart from them.¹⁰

For more information about emancipation or whether this applies to you, contact your nearest legal aid office (find it at www.valegalaid.org).

Note: In this guide, “minor” refers to an unemancipated minor.

WHAT IS CONFIDENTIALITY?

Confidentiality is the duty to keep information private. Some doctor-patient relationships may be confidential. If it's important to you that your health care provider keeps your information private, you should ask your provider whether he or she will protect the information you give him or her under the rules of confidentiality.

Can my parents access my medical records?

If you are a minor, your parent or legal guardian has a right, by law, to access your medical records unless (1) the record is a drug test related to rehabilitation care or (2) your doctor believes that releasing the information would cause substantial harm to you or to another person.¹¹

Will my parents find out if I see a doctor or other health care provider?

While you may be able to receive some services (like **birth control**) from a medical provider without your parents' consent, if your parent requests your medical records from that provider, he or she is legally obligated to give that information to your parent (unless one of the exceptions mentioned above applies to your case). In some cases, your parents will also get information about your medical visit from the health insurance company. If this is important to you, please speak with your health care provider about the likelihood of your parents receiving this information.

legal guardian
 medical care
 sex risks

Who can give permission to release my medical records to others?

Until you turn 18, your parent or legal guardian can and must give permission for your medical records to be released to others.¹² In those cases (like birth control) where you can receive services without your parent's consent, you also control whether those records are released to others.¹³ Neither your parent nor you have to give permission to release your medical records in some cases, for example in a medical emergency or to report suspected child abuse or neglect.¹⁴ A court can also order the release of your medical records.¹⁵

STAYING HEALTHY AS A TEEN

Who provides health care?

Teens can see a variety of **health care providers** for regular check-ups. You might visit a school health clinic, a private doctor's office, a free clinic run by the health department or a hospital-associated practice to get your health care. We use the term "health care provider" throughout this guide. It could mean a doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, osteopath, nurse or other professional medical person who provides health care.

What happens in a well-teen visit?

Checkups usually involve a physical exam, and talking about any questions and concerns you might have. If your parents take you for an appointment, the health care provider will usually ask them to leave at the end of the exam so you can ask your questions in private. When you see a health care provider, he or she should help you figure out what your top health issues are. It could be a major medical issue, such as diabetes or thyroid problems, or a preventive issue, such as making sure your vaccines are up to date. It could also include behavioral issues, sometimes called risk behaviors. This might include anxiety or other mental health issues, sexuality, eating habits, or alcohol or drug use.

What are the health issues I should be thinking about now?

Health care providers who regularly take care of teenagers know

what kinds of questions to ask you to determine what your issues are. If they don't ask the right questions, be sure to bring up a topic of concern! As a teenager, you should have time alone with your health care provider. In other words, your health care provider should ask your parents to step out of the room for part of the visit. The reason for this is not to keep secrets from parents but to recognize that you might feel more free to talk without your parent present. In a few years you will be an adult, and learning how to answer a health care provider's questions is a responsibility you will have.

BIRTH CONTROL

What is birth control?

Birth control is a plan to prevent pregnancy. The most obvious way to prevent a pregnancy is to not have sexual intercourse. There are also myths about ways to prevent a pregnancy, such as believing you can't get pregnant the first time you have sex, or you can't get pregnant at certain times of a woman's menstrual cycle. These are not true! For couples who are planning to have sexual intercourse, the only reliable way to prevent pregnancy is to use a birth control method. None of the methods is 100% effective, but many are close to that.

Methods of birth control, in order of effectiveness, include the following:

- **IUD** (Intrauterine device, such as Mirena)
- **Implant** (Implanon)
- **Injection** (Depo Provera)
- **Ring** (Nuva Ring)
- **Patch** (Ortho Evra)
- **Birth control pills**
- **Condoms** (male or female)
- **Emergency contraception** (Plan B)

For more information, visit www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/birthcontrol.html or www.youngwomenshealth.org/contra.html.

Whose permission do I need to get birth control?

Getting birth control is a serious decision to make. If at all possible, you should **discuss this decision with your parent or guardian**, or another trusted adult. If you are a minor, you do not need permission from a parent or guardian to get birth control.¹² There is no age limit. Because your parent or guardian can access your medical records, he or she may find out if you choose to use prescription birth control (see **“Confidentiality” on page 10**).¹³

Where can I get it?

Some forms of birth control, like condoms, are available at drugstores or clinics and can be purchased over the counter. There is no age requirement to purchase condoms. For prescription birth control, you need to see a licensed health care provider who can write prescriptions. You should speak with a provider in your area for information about appointments, costs, and for other questions.

Will my parents find out?

It is possible that your parent or guardian will find out that you are getting birth control. Your parent or guardian can access your medical records if you are a minor.¹⁴ Regardless of your age, if you bill your doctor’s visit or birth control prescription to your parent’s insurance, he or she may learn of your medical visit on an insurance statement, as well. These are big decisions, and you should talk with a **trusted adult** before making them.

Can I get prescription birth control for a friend?

No. A **health care provider** will not write a prescription for a patient that he or she has not seen in person. The health care provider probably will require that you have a routine exam, and will want to talk with you personally to make sure you are taking a form of birth control that is safe and appropriate for you and your needs. The health care provider may recommend a routine exam for a woman.

Emergency contraception—What is it?

Emergency contraception is a type of birth control taken up to five days after intercourse that one may take to prevent pregnancy.¹⁵ It is not a substitute for regular birth control, but is a backup method if, for example, your condom breaks.

Where can I get it? How old do I have to be to buy it?

It is available at pharmacies, and some health care providers may have it on hand. If you are 17 or older, you can buy it at a drugstore. If you are under 17, you will need a prescription.¹⁶ Check with your local **health care provider** or clinic for more information.

Will anyone know?

If you get emergency contraception through a prescription, a parent may learn of it in the same way he or she could learn about other prescriptions.

PREGNANCY

I might be pregnant. What can I do?

If you are pregnant, you have several options. Before making a decision, you should **talk to a parent or other trusted adult** to help you weigh your choices.

Pregnancy Test—Where can I get one?

Over-the-counter pregnancy tests are available at local drugstores and you can order them online. You also can have a pregnancy test done at a doctor's office or clinic.

When can I take one? How do I do it?

You can take a pregnancy test at any time. Each test will tell you at what point during the month you are likely to get the most accurate reading. For instructions on use, read the information provided with the test. If a home test is negative, it may be because you took it too early.

How old do I have to be to buy an over-the-counter pregnancy test?

There is no age requirement to buy an over-the-counter pregnancy test.

child support birth control
 prescriptions pregnancy counseling
 insurance social services test

If I go to the doctor for a pregnancy test, will my parents find out?

If you are a minor, you do not need permission from a parent or guardian to see a health care provider for a pregnancy test.¹⁷ If at all possible, however, you should discuss this decision with your **parent or guardian**. Remember, because your parents or guardians legally can access your medical records, they may find out that you went anyway.¹⁸

I'm afraid to talk to my parents. Who can I talk to?

If you can't talk to your parents, try speaking to another trusted adult. School counselors, priests, ministers, or other adult relatives might be good options for you. Teen health facilities sometimes offer counseling. If they don't, they can refer you to places that do. Use the **Resource Guide** in this brochure for help in locating a facility in your area that offers counseling services.

Pregnancy during the teen years**Can I still go to school if I'm pregnant? Can I keep my job?**

As a pregnant teenager, you still have rights. If you are pregnant, you have the right and responsibility to go to school. You can be home-schooled for some time after the baby is born. You may continue to work. For more information on the rights of pregnant teens, contact your local legal aid office (find it at www.valegalaid.org).

After I give birth, does the father have to help me take care of the baby?

If you are raising a child without the child's father or mother, you can seek child support—monthly payments—from him or her to help with the care of your child. For more information on receiving child support, contact your local legal aid office. The Virginia Department of Social Services also has information on its **website** about child support and links to applications for it.¹⁹

Adoption—Can I put my baby up for adoption?

Yes. A public social service agency or a private child-placing agency can make placements, or birth parents or legal guardians can make adoption arrangements.²⁰

Does the baby’s father have to agree if I choose adoption?

If the father has been acknowledged as the father, or if he is presumed to be the father, consent is required.

In Virginia, if a father enters his name on a registry (**Virginia Putative Father Registry**), he has a right, for a specified amount of time, to both notice of and consent for adoption of the baby. In some cases, consent is not required.²¹ For more information about whether or not a father’s consent is required in your particular case, contact your local legal aid office (find it at www.valegalaid.org).

If I choose adoption before the baby is born, can I change my mind later?

It depends. Making plans for adoption now does not mean you have consented to it. A mother cannot consent to adoption until three days after the baby’s birth. (A father, though, can consent before birth.) A parent has seven days after signing consent for adoption to revoke it.²² Contact your local legal aid office for more information (find it at).

If I don’t make adoption arrangements now, can I decide to after the baby is born?

You can initiate adoption proceedings after your child is born, if you choose. In addition, under Virginia’s safe haven laws, if you have no other possible alternative, you can leave your baby at a hospital (one that provides 24-hour emergency services) or rescue squad (one that employs EMTs) within 14 days of birth.²³

Abortion—Can teenagers get abortions?

A doctor can perform an abortion on a minor only with the authorization of a parent or legal guardian, or a court order. There are exceptions for abuse, neglect and medical emergencies, where a teen could get a court order (sometimes called “judicial bypass”) in place of parental permission.²⁴

Should I tell my parents I’m considering an abortion?

It’s always best to talk about major life decisions with a **parent or trusted adult**, as long as it’s safe to do so.

What if I can’t talk to my parents about abortion?

A minor may ask a judge to allow her doctor to perform an abortion without the authorization of a parent or guardian. To do that, a minor has to go to court and file papers with the clerk, then appear in front of a judge. The judge looks at whether the minor is mature enough and well informed enough to make this decision with the help of her physician, and if this decision is in her best interests.²⁵ For more information about judicial authorization for an abortion, call the juvenile court in your area (www.courts.state.va.us/courts/jdr.html).

Do I have to tell the baby’s father if I have an abortion?

There is no law requiring you to inform the baby’s father that you are having an abortion.

Can anyone make me have an abortion?

No one, not even your parent or guardian, can force you to have an abortion.

Where can I get an abortion?

Please contact a local doctor or health care facility for questions and details about services offered. Check the **Resource Guide** included in this brochure for help in locating a facility in your area. Note that the earlier you are in your pregnancy, the more options you will have and the more facilities that will be available to you.

How much does it cost?

The price of an abortion varies depending on where you choose to go, and how far along you are in your pregnancy. You should contact a facility for its price information. Some facilities or clinics provide price quotes online. Some facilities or clinics have a sliding-scale system, which means that what you pay depends on your personal financial situation.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STDs)

What is an STD?

STDs are diseases that people pass through sexual contact, not always intercourse, also called venereal diseases. They include genital herpes, genital warts (HPV), chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, syphilis, and some forms of hepatitis. Not all STDs produce the same symptoms in all people, and some have no symptoms.

For more information, go to www.mayoclinic.com/health/sexually-transmitted-diseases-stds/DS01123/.

I think I might have an STD. What should I do?

If you think you have an STD, you need to be tested and treated, both for your health and for the health of others. Most doctors and teen health facilities provide STD testing, as well as your local health department. See the **Resource Guide** for information on finding your local health department.

Virginia allows for confidential testing for STDs, which means that you provide your name at the time of testing, but the lab keeps the results of the test confidential (see below).²⁶ Local health departments in Virginia provide confidential testing for STDs for free, as well as treatment and related counseling.²⁷

HIV/AIDS

Virginia allows for confidential or anonymous²⁸ testing for HIV infection.

finances
health confidential diseases
treatment symptoms

With confidential testing, you give your name at the time of testing, but the lab keeps the results private. Virginia state law does require that labs report to the state the names of those persons who test positive for HIV, but the state will use that information only to notify your past partners that they might be at risk. A doctor is not required to report STD testing or treatment to your parents, but under Virginia's HIV confidentiality laws, the doctor has legal authority to do so if he or she chooses.²⁹

With anonymous testing, you do not provide your name; instead, the lab gives you a number so that you can receive the results from your test. If you use anonymous testing for HIV and your results are positive, the lab does not report those results by name.

The Virginia Department of Health provides phone numbers for anonymous test sites at www.vdh.state.va.us/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/testing.htm.³⁰

Where can I get tested for HIV?

Many clinics and facilities offer testing. See the Resource Guide for assistance in locating one in your area. Before a doctor gives you an HIV test, the law requires that he or she informs you that the test is planned, provides you information about the test, and lets you know that you have the right to decline it.³¹

Where can I get treated for an STD, including HIV?

Usually the same facilities that offer STD and HIV infection testing provide treatment options, if available. If you test positive for an STD, Virginia law requires the physician or person treating you to provide you with information about the disease, including what it is, how it is treated, how to keep from spreading it, and possibilities for additional testing.³² If you have a confirmed positive test result for HIV, you have the right to appropriate follow-up counseling—including the meaning of the test results, possibilities for additional testing, and information about treatments—and to mental health counseling.³³

Can I get tested and treated without my parents finding out?

Hopefully, you can **speak to your parents** about this. If that isn't possible for you, try to find another trusted adult to talk with about your situation. If you are a minor, you legally can consent to STD testing and treatment.³⁴ A doctor is not required to report STD testing or treatment to your parents, but under Virginia's HIV confidentiality laws, the doctor has legal authority to do so if he or she chooses.³⁵ Remember, however, that your parents can request to see your medical records.³⁶ And if you fill a prescription and bill it to your parent's insurance, he or she may find out through an insurance statement that you are being treated for an STD.

HOW MUCH DO TESTS AND SERVICES COST?

Costs vary from place to place. Contact a particular facility for more information. Some facilities or clinics offer a list of prices for services on their websites. Your health insurance may pay for some testing and treatment, but that may mean your parents learn about your visit.

I don't have a lot of money. Is there somewhere I can go that will help me?

Some facilities or clinics have a sliding-scale system, which means that what you pay depends on your personal financial situation. Some places without a sliding scale still may be willing to work with you to help you get the care you need. Do not hesitate to ask! For more information, contact a particular location.

IS IT A CRIME TO HAVE SEX AS A TEEN?

Choices about sexuality have emotional, physical, and legal consequences, which is why you should talk to your parent or another trusted adult about them. Sexual activity must be *consensual* to be legal. *Consensual* means that both people want to participate, and that both people are old enough to make that

decision. Under Virginia law, a person under 13 years old can never consent to sexual activity, so it is always illegal to have sex with a person under age 13.³⁷

What if I am under 18 and my boyfriend is over 18?

In Virginia, if someone over the age of 18 has consensual sex (including oral sex) with a minor who is at least 13 years of age but under 15 years of age, then that person is guilty of a felony. If someone over the age of 18 has consensual sex with a minor between the ages of 15 and 17, then that person is guilty of a misdemeanor.³⁸ A minor under the age of 13, by law, cannot consent to sex.³⁹

What if I am over 18 and my boyfriend is under 18?

The Virginia laws addressing sex with minors are gender-neutral, which means they should apply regardless of which partner is over 18.⁴⁰

What if we are both under 18?

If both partners are under 18, someone can accuse them of a crime, depending on the age difference. According to Virginia law, if a minor is accused and guilty of having consensual sex with a younger minor, that person is guilty of a misdemeanor, and if the age difference between the minors is three years or more, that person is guilty of a felony.⁴¹

Will we get in trouble if I tell a health care provider that we are having sex?

Health care providers are mandated reporters. That means they have a legal obligation to report child abuse. Some health care providers view sex between minors as something they need to report under the mandated reporter law. Whether or not a health care provider chooses to report your particular situation may depend on the doctor or the clinic where you go, or on your particular situation. For example, if you are 17 years old, and you are having sex with your boyfriend who is 18 years old, one health care provider may not act on the information you give him or her, but another may—and legally can—do so.

RAPE/SEXUAL ASSAULT

What is rape in Virginia?

Rape is making someone have sex by force, threats or intimidation. It can also mean having sex with someone who can't consent because he or she is under the influence of drugs or alcohol (including roofies) or he or she is too young to give consent.⁴²

A more formal definition is that rape is an act where one person causes another to engage in sexual intercourse against that person's will; by force, threat or intimidation against that person or against someone else; or by taking advantage of that person's mental incapacity or physical helplessness.⁴³

What is "date rape?"

Rape can happen with a stranger or with someone you know. Even if someone is your friend, or even if you were out on date with him, if he forced you to have sex, then that is rape.

I think I was raped. What should/can I do?

If you have just been raped, it is important that you go to a hospital for medical treatment. You also have the option of speaking with law enforcement so they can take steps to prosecute your attacker.

If you have been raped in the past and still need to speak with someone about it, several places offer counseling for victims of rape and sexual assault. Use the **Resource Guide** to locate a facility in your area that offers this type of counseling.

SAD, MAD OR FEELING ALONE

What are behavioral and mental health services?

Many adolescents have mental health problems that interfere with their daily life activities. Depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts are common mental health problems among adolescents.

Sometimes they show up as anger problems, irritability, loss of interest in being with friends, cutting, eating disorders and/or other types of risk taking. It is important to know that help is available, including counseling and medication. For information about drug abuse, visit <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>.

Why might I want behavioral or mental health services?

You might want help if you are easily stressed, anxious or depressed. Taking care of mental health problems now can help prevent problems that are more serious when you get older. Talking to friends is a good start, but not a substitute for professional help.

If I see a doctor or therapist about my mental health, will anyone find out?

If you seek treatment from a therapist and do not want anyone to find out, the therapist will be legally obligated to keep your treatment confidential unless, for example, his or her concern for your well-being compels him to share the information with someone to protect you from harm.⁴⁴ Your therapist can also tell your parent or guardian about your mental health treatment if your parent requests the information and if your therapist does not think it will be substantially detrimental to your well-being to share it with him or her. Your therapist can share information about your treatment if you give permission. You should discuss your therapist's privacy and disclosure policies and sign an informed consent form at the start of your treatment so he or she can explain to you the details about the confidentiality of your treatment. The law treats a minor as an adult for the purpose of consenting to outpatient mental health care and medication.⁴⁵

It is possible for your parent to find out about your mental health care in another way. If you bill your treatment to your parent's insurance company, your parent can learn of your therapist visits or prescriptions on an insurance statement.

Can I be forced to get behavioral health treatment if I don't think I need it?

A judge can require you to get psychiatric care, and your parents can ask the judge to order you into treatment. Below, we spell out all the things that might happen. If your parents think you need help, the best idea is often to meet with a good therapist, even if it's just once. That person can help you understand why your parents want you to get treatment and what kinds of treatment they would

recommend. That way, you get to help make the decisions, rather than having a judge make them for you.

How can a judge order treatment?

You can be required to get psychiatric treatment even if you do not think it is necessary if a court believes (1) you are a serious danger to yourself or others,⁴⁶ or (2) your ability to care for yourself properly has seriously deteriorated because of delusional thinking or other significant impairment.⁴⁷ The court can (1) hold you in a treatment facility temporarily,⁴⁸ (2) commit you for inpatient treatment,⁴⁹ or (3) force you to get outpatient treatment, depending on your condition.⁵⁰

If your parent requests for you to get treatment and you object to the treatment, a court can have you admitted to a mental health facility for up to 96 hours while it evaluates your case.⁵¹ The court must provide a guardian ad litem (a person trained to act in your best interests) and lawyer to represent you, if you do not already have one.⁵²

If the court determines that you are reasonably likely to benefit from inpatient treatment⁵³ and there is no appropriate, less-restrictive treatment,⁵⁴ the court can commit you for inpatient treatment for up to 90 days.⁵⁵

If the court decides that you do not need inpatient treatment,⁵⁶ but would benefit from outpatient treatment,⁵⁷ it can force you to receive outpatient mental health treatment for up to 90 days.⁵⁸ The community services board (an agency that links people with appropriate mental health and substance abuse services) where you live will monitor your outpatient treatment to make sure you are complying with the court's order.⁵⁹

If the community services board finds that you (1) are not complying with your outpatient treatment, and (2) are still a serious threat to yourself or others or that you're unable to care for yourself properly because of a mental illness, it can ask the court to have you committed.⁶⁰ Depending on the severity of your condition, the court can (1) have you committed for inpatient treatment for up to 30

days, (2) renew the order for your outpatient treatment or (3) cancel the order for your treatment altogether. The court may take into consideration your noncompliance when deciding which type of treatment to require.⁶¹

Can my parents force me to take medication for mental health issues?

As you read above, there is a way for the courts to force you to get outpatient treatment for up to 90 days. If you and your parents disagree about the need for your medications, the best strategy is to have a conversation with the person prescribing the medication and your parents. Explain what your concerns are about the medication (for example, side effects) and together you can brainstorm better options for you. Sometimes your prescriber can switch the dose or suggest a different medication.

OTHER QUESTIONS

I'm gay. Do these same laws apply to me?

Yes. The Virginia laws mentioned in this brochure do not specify sexual orientation and they apply to everyone.

What if I'm being harassed or denied access to care because I'm gay?

Some facilities may be more welcoming or have more information for LGBT teens than others. **ROSMY** has a youth support line (888-644-4390) for all people between the ages of 14 and 20 who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or are questioning their sexual orientation. You might ask them for help locating a facility near you.

I think my friend needs some help. Am I allowed to tell a doctor or nurse about her situation?

You can seek help for your friend, but do consider what the consequences might be if you share his or her information with health care providers. The rules of confidentiality may not protect that information.

Keep in mind that doctors and health care providers may be able to give you general advice, but they cannot treat a patient they have not seen. They probably will not be able to help your friend in his or her specific situation unless your friend is willing to come in to the office or clinic.

Do my parents have any responsibilities?

If you are a minor, your parent has a duty to provide you adequate medical care.⁶² In all of these situations—sexual activity, pregnancy, abortion, rape—you should talk with your parents if at all possible because you are making important decisions that often have long-term consequences. If you are in a situation where talking with your parents is neither advisable nor safe, then there are places that offer teenagers counseling and advice. See the Resource Guide for help in locating counseling services in your area.

RESOURCE GUIDE

How do I start a conversation about these things with my parents?

Many teens find it hard to talk to their parents about certain topics *and* many parents find it hard to talk about these topics with their teens. Most parents, however, care deeply about their teenage children and want them to be physically and emotionally healthy. Remember, parents were teenagers once. When you are under stress, worried about an unplanned pregnancy, an STD, or a mental health concern, you may develop “tunnel vision” and believe that your options are limited. You may think that it’s impossible to include your parents in significant health care decisions, even while you believe they should know what is going on with you. Talking to

outpatient
mom
concerns
conversation
substance
therapist
dad
abuse

an adult or a health care professional may help you untangle your mixed feelings and figure out how to talk to your parents about sensitive subjects.

Conversation starters with your parents or legal guardians: (if you can't say it, try putting it in a note or an email)

"Mom, you always told me you wanted me to talk to you about things in my life, so here it is ..."

"Dad, it is really hard for me to tell you this, but I need your advice ..."

"Mom, you know that boy I told you about at school? Well ..."

"Dad, I need help and I know I can turn to you. Can we talk? ..."

"Mom, I need to tell you about a friend who has a problem ..."

"Dad, I have been worried a lot about ..."

"Mom, I'm scared and I really need to talk with you ..."

How do I find the right health care provider or clinic for me?

It may seem difficult finding a health care provider for the first time, but don't worry. You have several options to help find a medical or mental health provider.

Family doctors

Your family doctor often provides many of the services discussed in this brochure. Often, your family doctor provides teen health services, including those related to birth control, STD testing and treatment, and pregnancy. Some family doctors, even though they also see your parents and other members of your family, are willing to discuss, in confidentiality, questions you may have or to provide services for you. If you are concerned about what the doctor might tell your parent or guardian, you should first ask your doctor if he or she is willing to discuss sexual or mental health issues with you, and if so, whether or not he or she will keep your conversation confidential. You also could ask your family doctor for the names of other doctors or clinics that can help you with a particular issue or concern.

Trusted family member or friend

Ask a parent or family member, if you can, for help in locating a health care provider or clinic. In addition, a friend may be able to provide you with advice, especially if he or she has been in your situation before.

School nurse

Often your school nurse can answer health-related questions you have or provide a list of teen health facilities in your area.

Regional doctors and clinics

What health care providers and clinics are available to you varies depending on where in Virginia you live. If there is a hospital in your region, you often can contact the hospital to get information about services and doctors available in your area.

In the Charlottesville area, the University of Virginia Health System provides a resource guide on its website. It is accessible at www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/teen-health/resources.cfm.

Your local health department

Another resource is your local health department. It often provides teen health services, including STD and HIV screening and counseling. The Virginia Department of Health website is www.vdh.state.va.us. You can locate your local health department using this website.

Use the Internet

You also can find information online about what health care facilities are available in your region. Be cautious, however, because there is no guarantee of the accuracy of the information you find. When possible, direct your health-related questions and questions about a facility, once you have located it, to that specific health care provider or clinic.

In addition to doing general searches for doctors in your area, there are websites that can help you locate a health care provider for your particular issue.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine has an online tool called “Finding an Adolescent Health Professional,” which allows you type in a city or state and an area of interest in order to locate a health care provider. To begin a search, start by typing in your state or city only, and then narrow your search from there. The website is www.adolescenthealth.org/Search/.

The Healthy Teen Network provides general information on teen health. The website is www.healthyteennetwork.org.

I’ve found a health facility in my area. How can I find out more about it?

Each doctor or health care facility is different. To learn more about a specific one, the best thing you can do is ask questions.

Here are some sample questions:

- How do you handle confidentiality with minors? Will I be able to see you for teen health-related services without you contacting my parents?
- How much do your services cost? What if I can’t afford to pay? Do you have any programs that can help me?

After talking with a facility, if you decide that you would rather go somewhere else, ask for a recommendation of where to go or for a list of other facilities in the area.

A word cloud featuring the following words in various colors and orientations: 'medications' (green), 'ask' (purple), 'discussions' (blue), 'nurse' (purple), 'internet' (blue), 'advice' (orange), 'school' (purple), 'family members' (purple), and 'decisions' (grey).

- ¹ Black's Law Dictionary, Third Edition.
- ² Va. Code Ann. § 1-203 & § 1-204.
- ³ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(1). This includes accessing or authorizing the disclosure of these medical records.
- ⁴ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(2). This includes accessing or authorizing the disclosure of these medical records.
- ⁵ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(F).
- ⁶ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(G).
- ⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(J).
- ⁸ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-241.
- ⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-334.
- ¹⁰ Va. Code Ann. §§ 16.1-331 & 16.1-333.
- ¹¹ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K).
- ¹² Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D)(1).
- ¹³ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E).
- ¹⁴ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D).
- ¹⁵ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D).
- ¹⁶ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(2).
- ¹⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K).
- ¹⁸ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K).
- ¹⁹ Planned Parenthood, available at <<http://www.plannedparenthood.org>> 29 June 2009.
- ²⁰ Planned Parenthood. available at <<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/emergency-contraception-morning-after-pill-4363.htm>> 5 October 2009
- ²¹ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(2).
- ²² Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K).
- ²³ Virginia Department of Social Services, available at <<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/dcse.html>> 4 August 2009.
- ²⁴ Virginia Department of Social Services, Parental Placement Adoption, available at http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/interstate_parental.html> 4 August 2009.
- ²⁵ Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Putative Fatherhood, available at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/text/family/ap/putative_fatherhood.htm> 4 August 2009; Va. Code §§ 63.2-1249 to 1253.
- ²⁶ Va. Code Ann. § § 63.2-1223
- ²⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-371.1 & § 40.1-103.
- ²⁸ Va. Code Ann. §§ 16.1-241 & 16.1-241(V). The authorization becomes part of the minor's medical record.
- ²⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-241(V).
- ³⁰ A doctor must report positive results for HIV, AIDS, and some STDS - syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, chancroid, granuloma inguinale and lymphogranuloma verereum – to the health department. Under confidentiality rules, a doctor also can report results (but is not required to do so) to parents of a minor, the infected person's legal spouse, other health care professionals caring for the infected person, or anyone allowed the information by way of court order. Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-36(C); Virginia Department of Health, "HIV/STD Reporting Requirements for Virginia Physicians."
- ³¹ Virginia Department of Health, Counseling and Testing Information, available at <<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/testing.htm>> 4 August 2009.

- ³² Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-55.1.
- ³³ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-36(C) & § 32.1-36.1(10).
- ³⁴ Virginia Department of Health, Counseling and Testing Information, available at <<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/testing.htm>> 4 August 2009.
- ³⁵ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-37.2.
- ³⁶ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-56.
- ³⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-37.2.
- ³⁸ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(1).
- ³⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-36(C) & § 32.1-36.1(10).
- ⁴⁰ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K).
- ⁴¹ Va. Code § 18.2-63.
- ⁴² Va. Code §§ 18.2-63 & 18.2-371.
- ⁴³ Va. Code § 18.2-63.
- ⁴⁴ Va. Code § 18.2-63 & § 18.2-371.
- ⁴⁵ Va. Code § 18.2-63.
- ⁴⁶ Va. Code § 18.2-61.
- ⁴⁷ Va. Code § 18.2-61.
- ⁴⁸ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D)(6)
- ⁴⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)
- ⁵⁰ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D)(1)
- ⁵¹ Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D)(7)
- ⁵² Va. Code Ann. § 32.1-127.1:03(D)
- ⁵³ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(K)(ii)
- ⁵⁴ Va. Code Ann. § 54.1-2969(E)(4)
- ⁵⁵ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-339(B)(1)(i)
- ⁵⁶ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-339(B)(1)(ii)
- ⁵⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-339(A)
- ⁵⁸ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345
- ⁵⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.2(A)
- ⁶⁰ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-339(A)
- ⁶¹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-339(C)
- ⁶² Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345(2)
- ⁶³ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345(3)
- ⁶⁴ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345
- ⁶⁵ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.2(3)
- ⁶⁶ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.2(2)
- ⁶⁷ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.2
- ⁶⁸ The “community services board” is the government body that provides mental health services in your city or area. Va. Code Ann. § 37.2-100
- ⁶⁹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.3
- ⁷⁰ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-345.4
- ⁷¹ Va. Code Ann. § 16.1-228.