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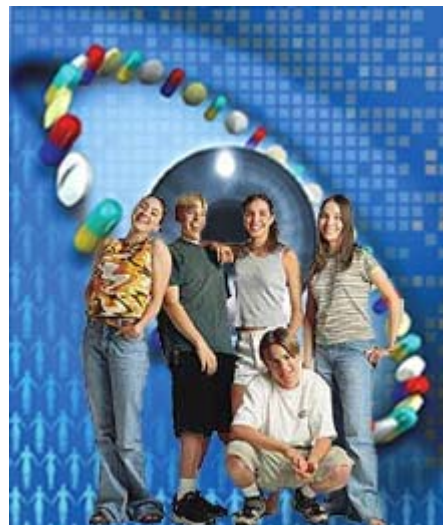
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What Teenscreen Doesn't Want You to Know about Parental Consent

By: [Mary Collins](#)



Is your child being "mentally screened" at school without your knowledge or permission? TeenScreen, usurping parental rights.

[More:]

Teen Screen, a program advertised as a "free" psychiatric "service" to prevent suicide, has caused an uprising all across the US. Citing the dangers of psychiatric drugs and important issues of parental rights, individuals and determined groups have spoken out against TeenScreen as a harmful factor in the attempts to care for the problems of children and teens.

TeenScreen's aim is to locate more children that can be identified as mentally ill and routed into "mental health" treatment. Many of these would be "treated" with psychiatric drugs, ignoring the fact that many of these very same drugs carry FDA-mandated Black Box warning labels because they are known to cause violence and suicide.

THE DANGER OF DRUGS

Internationally, more than 19 warnings have been issued on the dangers of psychiatric drugs since October 2004. The U.S. F.D.A., the European Medicines Agency Scientific Committee, the British Medical Journal, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Norwegian researchers, the Pediatric Advisory Committee, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child,

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etc. have all contributed to the awareness campaign. Through scientific research, the destructive nature of psychiatric drugs has been brought to light.

At least eight of the last 13 U.S. school shootings were committed by teens taking prescribed psychiatric drugs known to cause violent and suicidal behavior. A prime example is Columbine High School, where 18-year-old Eric Harris and 17-year-old Dylan Klebold killed 13 and wounded 23 others. Harris was taking an antidepressant drug known to cause violent behavior. Klebold's family has never revealed whether he was also taking medication. Privacy laws prevent that information from being disclosed without their permission.

The adverse effects of the drugs are known. It's unfortunate that the warnings had to come so late for many. Perhaps Eric Harris' parents would have made different decisions if they were given the full truth about the dangers of these drugs.

HOW TEENSCREEN WORKS

The biggest threat that TeenScreen poses may not be the drugs at all. How does it affect a young person to be told by an "authority" that he or she has a permanent, incurable brain disorder? After a child takes the TeenScreen survey, a mental health "professional" reviews his answers and speaks to the child. In this conversation, the "professional" can make disturbing statements to the child. He may tell the child, without any brain tests, that his brain is abnormal, that he has a permanent and potentially disabling disease, that he is "damaged goods". The child will then be sent on his way with the new "knowledge" that he is not a normal, healthy teenager as he thought in the morning but rather that he has a "mental disorder" that can ruin his life. The child hears this news alone, without parental involvement or knowledge. Often, the parents do not even know that their child was taking a test.

In a lawsuit filed in September 2005, Chelsea Rhodes of Indiana alleged that she took the TeenScreen test and was told that she had two mental disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder. The lawsuit alleges that the examination itself and the ensuing diagnosis caused both Chelsea and her parents severe emotional harm. Chelsea's parents were not made aware of the test in advance and gave no permission for their daughter to participate.

TEENSCREEN PLAYING THE NUMBERS GAME ON PARENTAL CONSENT

Some TeenScreen sites use "passive consent", in which each and every parent is assumed to have consented, unless they specifically state otherwise in writing. This is done by sending a letter or printing a notice in a newsletter, informing parents of the upcoming TeenScreen, giving very little information about it, and providing a form for the parents to sign if they will not allow their child to be screened. Of course there is never any certainty that the parents actually see the letter or notice and it is also possible that the letter rejecting TeenScreen may be lost in transit back to the school. Leslie McGuire, TeenScreen's Director, states: "Unless we hear from you that we can't screen your child we assume we have your permission and we're gonna' screen them." For any parent that did not see the notice and did not know that their child would be participating in a TeenScreen test, this is clearly "no consent", not "Passive Consent". When parents find out, many are outraged by the violation of their rights.

TeenScreen's website states that all TeenScreen sites must obtain parental permission before offering screening to youth. Yet, passive consent, in which many parents will have no knowledge of the event and thus will not have given

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permission, is acceptable to TeenScreen. Passive consent is a way to increase the number of children that are screened. In response to the wave of protests from parents and organized groups, TeenScreen has changed the wording on their website several times to attempt to distance themselves from passive screening. At the time of this writing, the website claims that TeenScreen "strongly advises" the use of active parental consent but passive consent (which can mean "no consent") is still in use.

The actual number of passive versus active sites is difficult to determine. Various percentages have been reported by TeenScreen, with numbers sometimes swinging wildly from one day to the next. In September 2005, The British Medical Journal published an article by freelance Journalist, Jeanne Lenzer, in which it was stated that 15 to 20% of TeenScreen sites use passive consent. According to Ms. Lenzer, Laurie Flynn, TeenScreen's Executive Director, was asked to confirm the information. As of Monday September 26th, Ms. Flynn did not object to the number of 15-20%. Then on Tuesday September 27th, she wanted to change the number to 4%, quite a shift for one day. TeenScreen's own website has been playing with the numbers as well. In September 2005, the website reported that 85% of sites used active consent, in October this was altered to 98.4%, then later to 98.2%. The next update was January 2006, when the percentage was removed altogether. Leslie MacGuire once reported that 25% of their sites use passive screening.

Evidently it's quite a secret about how many students are taken into the TeenScreen program by way of passive consent. One thing that is known is that passive screening increases the number of children screened dramatically. In an email from a Florida school official, he stated that the use of passive screening could increase their participation rate from 50% to 95%. The Philadelphia Enquirer reported that in one school using active consent, only 4.2% of parents allowed their children to be screened.

With no reliable numbers available, one can only make guesses and calculations as to how many children are screened every year without their parents being informed. In a simple example, let's take 4 schools. One school (25%) uses passive consent and the other three schools (75%) use active consent. If each school has 1000 students, the single passive-consent school could screen as many as 950 children. All three of the active-consent schools combined could screen as few as 126 children (4.2%, as in the one school district reported by the Philadelphia Enquirer). And of the 950 screened using only passive consent, not one child will have a written consent from his or her parents.

THE FOUR LEVELS OF PARENTAL CONSENT

1. No consent
2. Passive consent
3. Active parental consent
4. Full informed consent

"No consent" is just what it sounds like, simply screening children with no parental consent at all. Supposedly, no TeenScreen sites operate on a "no-consent" basis but, in practice, many children are screened without the parent providing consent or even knowing about the screening. Without the parent's consent or prior knowledge, their children are asked introverting questions such as: "Has there been a time when nothing was fun to you and you just weren't interested in anything?", "Have you often felt nervous when you've had to do things in front of people?" or "Are you still thinking of killing yourself?"

Then, still without parental knowledge, the child is sent to a "clinician" who

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decides which label to use. It could be "Panic disorder", "Active suicide ideation" or "Social Phobia", all of which are simply lists of behaviors voted into existence as "mental disorders" by psychiatrists. The child is then told to seek help from "mental health" workers. No minister, priest, rabbi, medical doctor, nutritionist, allergist or any other alternative help is recommended to the child.

And finally, at the complete whim of the "mental health" practitioner, the child may be deemed a danger to himself and others and forcibly held in a psychiatric institution for up to 72 hours for observation. The first time the parent hears about the screening could be from a policeman calling to say that their 14-year-old is locked in the back seat, behind a metal grate and locked in by unbreakable glass on the way to involuntary commitment in the psych ward. Then of course the parent or insurance company will get the bill.

There is a law that is supposed to protect and help parents, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). This federal law states that prior, written parental consent must be obtained before a child can be given a survey, analysis or evaluation. "Passive consent" is an illegal, deceptive method used by Teen Screen to bypass the requirement for parental consent and increase the number of children screened.

"Active consent" describes those schools and school districts that require a written consent to be given prior to screening. This method may be preferable to "no consent" or "passive consent" but is still sorely lacking when it comes to protecting parental rights.

There are many troubles with TeenScreen's "active consent". One consideration is the matter of whether or not the parent actually saw or signed the consent. With TeenScreen sites offering free pizza coupons, movie tickets, or \$50 mall gift certificates for returning consent slips, how many teens have arrived at school the day of the TeenScreen test without having the form signed and simply signed it themselves?

Even more important is the matter of what information is given to the parents. There are federal and state laws requiring "informed consent", meaning that before someone agrees to participate in any medical procedure or experiment, they must be informed of and must understand the medical facts and the risks involved.

"Full informed consent" for TeenScreen would be a consent given only after having received and understood all the pertinent data involved.

This would include:

- The purpose of screening (TeenScreen sells their service as suicide prevention but no study has even shown a reduction in suicide or proven even one prevented suicide.)
- Who is performing the screening (The screening may be performed by employees or agents of a for-profit "mental health" treatment facility but this may not divulged to parents.)
- That the screening has an 84% rate of false-positives (meaning that as many as 84% of students can be falsely identified as "mentally ill")
- The screening questions (TeenScreen will not reveal the questions to parents)
- The potentially bad effect of presenting suicide as something to be considered
- A full understanding of the basic foundation of psychiatry's "diagnoses", since there are no scientific tests that show whether a person has or does not have a mental disorder
- The fact that Psychiatry's "Diagnostic Statistical Manual" has over 300 behaviors that have just been voted on, according to whim, not tests or real facts

- The fact that the child may be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder with no objective medical testing, a label which can remain with that child for the rest of his life
- That some career paths may be closed to the child because of the diagnosis and/or psychiatric treatment
- That the parents may lose their parental rights or even be criminally charged with neglect if they refuse to accept the diagnosis and give the child psychiatric treatment
- A full understanding of the dangers and effects of the drugs that may be given to children for these "mental disorders" including deaths, violence and suicide

NO TeenScreen sites use full informed consent.

THE FOLLY OF TEEN "ASSENT"

According to the FAQ page on TeenScreen's web site, youth must provide written "assent" to participate in the TeenScreen program.

However, as stated in the Rhoades family's lawsuit in Indiana, a teenager has no legal standing to make such a statement, "Any execution of the assent form by Chelsea was not knowing, effective, or valid consent to the administration of the TeenScreen test upon Chelsea because she did not have the legal capacity to consent and she was not aware of the purpose of the assent, the nature of the test to be given, or the purpose for which the test was being given."

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Communicate.

Call your local school board or high school today. Find out if they have used or are even considering TeenScreen. If they are, make a formal, written request for records and find out if they are providing full informed consent in accordance with the law. Demand that your rights be protected. Write letters to the school and the school board, show up at meetings and speak up for parental rights, inform and organize your friends to do the same. Demand full informed consent, always. It is the only way to protect the rights of parents.

It is TeenScreen's responsibility to protect parental rights yet they are not doing it. The government makes laws to protect the public from having their rights trampled but so far laws have had little effect on TeenScreen's operation. Only a concerted, grass-roots effort can restore and protect parental rights. Your voice is needed. Now.

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June 16, 2006 *Bio: Mary Collins is a 72-year-old grandmother living in New Hampshire. She attained a BA in English Literature with a minor in History in 1954 from Millsap's College in Jackson, Mississippi and was involved in education for over 20 years. Email: marycollins_16_2@rushpost.com*

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