



June 5, 2006

Dear TeenScreen Colleague,

I am writing to inform you of important steps the TeenScreen Program is taking to strengthen our commitment to fully informed and documented parental consent. Effective August 1, 2006, all school-based sites will be required to obtain written (“active”) consent from the parents or legal guardians of minor students. In addition, sites will now be required to obtain written consent from participants themselves rather than their parents if they are 18 or older or emancipated under state law. Enclosed is the TeenScreen Consent and Assent Policy Fact Sheet for School-Based Sites, which will answer questions you may have and help you implement the new policy.

In an effort to make the policy consistent throughout the entire TeenScreen Program, all school-based sites will be required to use the enclosed standard Parent Consent Letter and Form, Participant Consent Letter and Form and Participant Assent Forms. Electronic copies of these documents will also be emailed to you, and Spanish versions of the Parent Consent Letter and Form will be posted on the password protected section of our Web site in the coming weeks.

We are confident that this updated consent policy will strengthen your local site and the national program, and make consent and assent clearer for the families we serve. For some sites, the updated policy and forms will be a departure from the way in which they currently operate, but I want to assure you that we did not make this decision lightly and that we will be available to help make this a straightforward transition for you and your staff. A technical assistance call on this topic is scheduled for Tuesday, June 13th at 1:00 PM EST to address any concerns or questions you may have about the new policy or the required forms. Information on joining this call will be emailed to you shortly.

As always, I would like to thank you for your support of TeenScreen. It is our hope that these new policies will help to ensure the continued growth and success of the program. Please do not hesitate to contact your TeenScreen Program Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns. We value our partnerships with each of you and look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leslie McGuire".

Leslie McGuire, MSW
Director, Columbia University TeenScreen Program