



### To the Parents of Our Adolescent Patients:

Your child has reached an age when we as health care providers start to see our patients alone for a short time during their well visit. The teen years are a very personal and sometimes confusing time, and many children have questions for us that they may not feel comfortable asking with a parent present.

Additionally, teens may give us more lengthy or honest answers to our questions without you in the room. Reassuring adolescents that they are normal is a large part of our job, and “being there” for them should they need us is one of our missions. They can ask us anything and get our advice. We always encourage our patients to discuss the same topics with their parents that we discuss in the office. Your perspective and opinion will always be the most important to them and to us.

Building trust is important. We want to encourage adolescents to speak for themselves about their health and lifestyle. It shows that they are learning to take responsibility for and are playing an active role in their own health. So when we ask you to step out of the room, it is only because we want to get to know your child better. We will ask you to please have a seat in the waiting room (and not just stand outside the door), and we will invite you back in again when that part of the visit is concluded. If your child would feel more comfortable with a chaperone during the physical exam, we are happy for our nurse or a parent to be present during the exam. Time alone with the provider may include sick visits as well, so please respect your teen’s wishes if they prefer to see their provider alone.

Please discuss the importance of this one-on-one time between your child and the provider before the appointment. Encourage them to write down their concerns. Michigan law requires that we provide confidential advice and services to our patients. These confidential services include contraceptive care, testing and treatment for pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and drug and alcohol abuse treatment. It is important to know, however, that if they are doing anything to hurt themselves or others, or if someone is hurting them, we will break confidentiality and speak with you and the proper authorities.

As part of the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended screenings at each adolescent visit, your child may be asked confidentially to complete screening tests about depression and substance use. They will also be asked about high risk behaviors like texting, cyber bullying, and sexual activity. We do this not

to pry into their personal lives, but to advocate for their health and safety. Answers to their questions remain confidential; you will not have access to them unless your teen chooses to share them with you.

Please note that routine adolescent screenings **may** also include urine screening for sexually transmitted infections starting at age 14, as well as cholesterol and HIV screening after 16 years of age. As such, these screenings may appear on your explanation of health benefits. Simply put, these screenings should not be viewed as an indication of patient reported sexual activity. We do not routinely test for substance abuse; if you request such testing, your teen must be informed in advance and agree.

We feel it is still important that you are present for all of your child's visits. This will allow us to obtain pertinent and accurate medical histories from you; to get your insight into the myriad of issues which might be affecting their health; to get your consent for recommended vaccines (please note we **strongly** recommend all pre-teens and teens receive the HPV vaccine); and to discuss any concerns you may have about your child's health.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please feel free to ask any provider. We thank you for trusting us with the care of your adolescent child!