

Why Religious Leaders?

We care about the spiritual, moral, emotional and physical health of our children. Because we embrace the dignity and worth of our children, we teach them to respect, protect and love themselves and others. We have a moral obligation to protect them from sexual abuse, disease and teen pregnancy.

We are a resource for families. Families in our congregations often turn to us for help. In a national study, 88% of teens said they agree that – “it would be much easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.” Together, we can talk to our teens and help them make good decisions. Because decisions about dating, marriage, sexual activity and parenting are moral and spiritual decisions, parents and religious institutions have a responsibility to impart the beliefs, values and information to shape those decisions.

Youth care about religion and want to hear from us. Outside of the public schools, religious institutions serve more young people than any other community institution. More than 60% of American teens report that they spend at least one hour per week in activities in a church or synagogue. 75% of teens say religion is at least somewhat important to them and 50% say it's very important. While there are important reasons for having sexuality education in public schools, it is not the job of public schools to impart the spiritual foundation that those of us in the religious community can offer young people in their decision-making. Kids want to hear from us.

We are called to bring justice, love and compassion to our community. The teachings of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions include an emphasis on reaching out to people who are in need. The values of compassion, generosity, hospitality, and concern are common to all the major faith traditions. Teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and poverty are realities that people of faith would like to reduce. Churches and other faith-based institutions can help not only their own young people, but also young people in the community.