

MPHA Policy Forum, January 2013

A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT TEENS AND SEXUALITY

The January MPHA Forum was another excellent 90 minutes of valuable information on a timely topic—this time “Teens and Sexuality—What’s new beyond the birds and the bees?” This is an especially important subject for MPHA as it highlights some of the racial health disparities in our state. In Minnesota, the birth rate per 1000 Females age 15-19 years is 63/year for African Americans and 15/year for Whites. And in our state, the incidence of gonorrhea is 851/100,000 for African Americans and 22/100,000 for Whites.

At the presentation, the two teen presenters were particularly effective. Andres Alvarez and Kadeeja Rivers are seniors at South High in Minneapolis and peer educators for the Planned Parenthood Teen Council. They spoke of the importance of educating their peers about not just sexuality but also about healthy relationships and decision making, which is key to this topic.

Nina Jonson, Community Education Program Manager at myHealth for Teens and Young Adults(formerly West Teen Suburban Teen Clinic) uses humor to enhance teaching sex education in Hennepin, Scott and Carver Counties. Judith Kahn, Executive Director of Teenwise Minnesota, the statewide leader in promoting adolescent sexual health and preventing adolescent pregnancy, has devoted her professional and personal life to ensuring that all young people have the knowledge, skills and supports they need to live healthy lives.

The conversation at my table during the question/discussion time was thought-provoking and allowed me to meet some new people working in this area. The breakfast and coffee were excellent as always! I have come to expect these forums to include insightful presentations and reflective conversations and my expectations were met!

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