

IF YOU DON'T KNOW ... ASK!

The Youth Leadership Task Force of DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy invites you to send in your questions for its monthly Adults Only advice column. Please send your questions to jfourth@teenpregnancydc.org. In the subject line, please put Advice Column.

Q: I work in DC government and have been wondering what kinds of recreational activities interest teens?

A: When I have free time, I enjoy going out with friends to the movies, the mall or the amusement park, bowling, eating out, or just walking around, exploring the sites. I also enjoy watching television and DVDs and listening to CDs at my friend's house. And like most of my friends, I love playing X-Box games.

When possible, I also play basketball, football, and softball because it is a way to hang out with my friends and do fun things as a group.

Q: If you tell Mayor Williams anything you wanted, what would you tell him?

A: I would tell Mayor Williams that being a teenager is stressful. Sometimes, teenagers face more obstacles than adults. We deal with the pressure to be cool, the pressure to look a certain way and the pressure to be "normal." But in DC, just like in other cities, there are different challenges. In DC, you have to deal with the pressures to have sex, the pressure to raise a child (if you have one), the pressure to be a "thug" and to "go hard," the pressure to go on without support of parents or the presence of parents.

One of the most pressuring things that teens in DC have to face daily is the pressure to have money. To get money, some teens fight others, rob others, shoot others, sell drugs, sell their bodies, sell stolen things and do all kinds of things for money because some of us are poor and we just want to have things like other kids so we can be in the "in crowd."

I would also tell Mayor Williams that some teens have a hard road and some of them have to face it alone. Teens also have younger siblings that we have to set examples for even though no one has set an example for us. Times are hard.

Being a teenager in DC is not very interesting. We don't have enough things to do that don't cost a lot of money like places to go where we are safe after school, or even on the weekends. There are a few rec centers but they mostly have programs for the younger ages, like elementary school kids. In high school, there is no such thing as an after school program, we have to make our own fun like hanging out while some kids spend their time doing things they are not supposed to do. That's how teens get into trouble. Give us youth centers, a place of fun where we can just chill, hang out and have fun.

If you know a teen who would benefit from the Youth Leadership Task Force experience, please go to www.teenpregnancydc.org and download an application.