

Parental Consent Laws: A Growing Concern

by Ruth McDaniel

In 1988 there was a tragedy in our nation, but few people know of it. A seventeen-year-old girl lost her life. Her death could have been prevented. In 1990 the Supreme Court seized the opportunity to insure that other young women would not suffer the same fate which took the life of this young woman. What killed Becky Bell? She died of septic abortion. Indiana law PL-106 took her life.

The Indiana law states that minors seeking abortion must have the consent of at least one parent. Becky did not tell her parents about her pregnancy because she was afraid of their reaction. She was so afraid that, in desperation, she sought an illegal abortion which resulted in massive infection and finally, death.

Laws that require the consent of one or both parents are now enforced in fourteen states. Supporters of these laws suggest that the purpose of the law is to improve communication between parents and children. They say that parents should be involved in decisions

when a minor is faced with an unwanted pregnancy. Sadly, not all minors have caring and supportive parents who will help them deal with this type of crisis. Many young women fear physical abuse if they share their ordeal with their parents. Some have even become pregnant as a result of incest. Parental consent laws do not help, only harm, these young women.

What has happened in states where these laws are enforced? In Minnesota, minors are required to inform both biological parents if they wish to seek an abortion. The Minnesota law allows a judicial bypass, which gives minors who do not wish to inform both parents the opportunity to present their case to a judge, who has the power to issue a waiver of the law. Many of Minnesota's judges are against abortion and some now admit that the judicial bypass does not work. The law does not help minors; it causes many of them to seek second trimester abortions or continue an unwanted pregnancy.

The Feminist Majority Foundation and the North Carolina Coalition for Choice follows consent laws and the resulting effects on abortion. Since the parental consent law went into effect in Minnesota, the teen birth rate in that state has risen 38.4%. The implications for the health of teens are horrifying. Adolescents are 200% more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties; for those under the age of 15 the risk of death in childbirth is one thousand times greater.

Since Minnesota's law went into effect the amount of second trimester abortions has also risen dramatically. Second trimester abortions are more dangerous than those performed in the first trimester and, due to risk of complications, often must be performed in a hospital rather than a clinic. In the United States, only 8% of abortions are performed in the second trimester. In Minnesota the rate of second trimester abortion rose by 26.5% after its parental consent law took effect. Delays in the

judicial bypass system and complicating factors of the parental consent law can be attributed to this increase.

What did that Supreme Court decide in the summer of 1990? The majority opinion stated that parental consent laws did not present an undue burden on teen-age women. It is doubtful that Becky Bell's parents would agree.

In North Carolina there is a growing move to enact parental consent laws. Please exercise your power as a voter to prevent enactment of this type of law. Call or write your state representatives. They need to hear from you!

Before you put pen to paper...

by Alyson Honeycutt

Thesis, development, organization. If you've been to the Writing Center, you may have noticed these words pinned up like a creed over each tutor's desk. They are kept there to remind the tutors of their purpose—to help students build good writing skills from the ground up.

Meredith's Writing Center opened in the fall of 1987 under the direction of Nan Miller. It is staffed by a group of Meredith students who have been trained, not just to spot problems with student writing, but to help students discover ways to improve their writing. Like other writing centers in colleges across the country, Meredith's center operates on the principle that when students discuss their writing with peer tutors, the student gains insights and ideas they've not had working alone. Collaborative learning does not involve collaborative writing. A constructive tutor/student relationship has the student, at some point, acquiring the skill to evaluate and improve her writing independently.

What exactly does the Writing Center offer? Mostly students receive free, one-on-one tutoring for all levels of writers who seek help with a variety of subjects and assignments. Tutoring in French and Spanish is available, and help is offered to students for whom English is a second language. Tutors assist with

library research, word processing, and with writing resumes and essays for graduate school. Student writers can take advantage of both group and individual tutoring in grammar and grammar worksheets that a student can work and check at her own pace. A series of workshops each semester help English 111 students prepare for the competency test. Because tutors have had many of the same courses and professors as students who come to the center, they can often answer students' questions about subject matter or about professors' expectations. And finally, comfort and encouragement are a mainstay of the center.

What exactly does the Writing Center not offer? It's not a proofreading service or a fix-it shop. Nor can it guarantee better grades. Although one-time visits can be helpful, tutors are seldom able to work a miracle in a single 30-minute session. Experience shows that those who benefit most from the service are those who make regular appointments.

Interested? You can make an appointment at the Writing Center by signing up on the sheet posted outside the Writing Center entrance at 122 Jones Hall, by coming by when the center is open, or by calling 829-2800 and leaving a message on the recorder. It's best to sign up a week in advance and to bring a draft or some notes to your

appointment. Last semester tutors held 925 consultations and will offer at least that number again this semester. Hours are as follows:

Sunday	6-8pm
Monday	1-5pm, 8-10pm
Tuesday	noon-2pm, 3:30-5:30pm, 7-9pm
Wednesday	1-5pm

Thursday	10-noon, 3:30-5:30pm
Friday	noon-1pm (Spanish only)

This semester's tutors hope you'll join those who've discovered the benefits of peer tutoring in a relaxed, congenial atmosphere. Come visit the Writing Center!

Alyson Honeycutt is a 3rd year Writing Center Tutor