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New National Survey of Parents and Kids:

**BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL PRESSURES
“BIG PROBLEMS” FOR TODAY’S TWEENS AND YOUNGER KIDS;
PARENTS OFTEN WAIT FOR THEIR KIDS TO RAISE TOUGH ISSUES**

***Nickelodeon Launches Public Information Partnership with Kaiser Family Foundation and
Children Now to Get Kids and Parents Talking Together***

Large numbers of 8-11 year olds say teasing and bullying (74%), discrimination and disrespect (43%), and threats of violence (38%) occur at their school. One third of 10-11 year olds (33%) say that pressure to have sex is a “big problem” for kids their age. Yet, many parents still put off talking about tough issues with their children, according to a new national survey of parents and kids.

Parents are especially likely to delay talking about puberty, sex and related issues. Two thirds of parents of 8-11 year olds (61%) report that their child initiated the first conversation about the basics of reproduction. In two out of five families, discussions about puberty (40%) and HIV/AIDS (38%) were also started by the child.

Even when parents and kids do talk, the survey finds that the message isn’t always getting through. From a third to more than half of 8-11 year olds whose parents say they have talked with them about a particular issue do not recall the conversation. For example, 59 percent of kids whose parents say they discussed HIV/AIDS don’t remember the conversation. Parents are also more likely than kids to say that talks about these issues occur “regularly,” while kids tend to recall just one or two discussions.

The survey is being released today as part of the launch of a **new public information partnership** between **Nickelodeon**, the number-one kids’ entertainment brand, and ***Talking with Kids About Tough Issues***, an ongoing campaign of the **Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now**, to encourage earlier and more frequent parent-child communication.

The partnership has developed new multimedia resources to help parents and kids talk together about issues like puberty and sex, violence, alcohol/drugs, and respect. At www.everythingnick.com, parents can get age-appropriate guidance and tips for raising difficult topics with their kids. At www.nick.com/your_world, kids can take a “Talk Challenge” and share experiences. Parents can also call 1 800 CHILD 44 to receive a free guide developed exclusively for the partnership by parenting expert and best-selling author Dominic Cappello. Parents and kids can find out about these resources through public service advertisements (PSAs) that begin airing today on Nickelodeon and other Viacom properties, including VH-1, TNN, CMT, Nick at Nite, and Noggin.

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“Kids confront issues in everyday life and often have to make tough choices. We want to encourage parent communication that can help kids navigate “kid-dom” in a way that is real and meaningful in their lives,” said Marva Smalls, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs, Nickelodeon. “This partnership with the *Talking with Kids About Tough Issues* campaign is designed to give parents the tools and empower kids to improve that dialogue.”

Tackling Tough Issues Early

A majority of parents of 8-11 year olds think growing up today is “harder” than when they were kids (65%); even more parents of adolescents (12-15 year olds) agree (78%). About half of 8-11 year olds say discrimination (51%) and violence (46%) are “big problems” for kids their age; 44 percent say alcohol and drug use are concerns. Nearly seven in ten (68%) say kids they know already have boyfriends or girlfriends, and one in six (16%) see other students kissing or making out at school. By adolescence, these issues loom even larger in young people’s lives.

Most parents have talked with their 8-11 year old about alcohol and drugs (91%), discrimination (87%), and teasing and bullying (78%). Fewer have discussed puberty (56%) or reproduction (49%). Many parents of adolescents find it difficult to get beyond the basics; less than half of parents of 12-15 year olds have discussed decision making about sex (49%).

“It’s not just parents of teenagers anymore who stay up late worrying about their kids. Tough issues are confronting kids at younger ages,” said Tina Hoff, Vice President, Public Health Information and Partnerships, Kaiser Family Foundation. “This is a wake-up call for parents to start talking early and often with their kids. Through this partnership, we have developed new tools that can help them.”

Waiting Too Long?

Many kids, even those as young as 8, say they need to know more *now* about topics parents may be reluctant to bring up. About half of 8-11 year olds want to know more about discrimination (57%), puberty (46%), alcohol and drugs (45%), and HIV/AIDS (41%). Older kids also say they still need more information about these issues, as well as about sexual decision making (46% of 12-15 year olds).

“Our kids today are growing up in an increasingly complicated world. Talking with kids about sex or alcohol is as important for their safety as talking to them about buckling a seat belt,” said Lois Salisbury, President, Children Now. “When parents talk early about these issues, kids are more likely to maintain open communications and make wiser decisions.”

While kids want to know more, they also worry about how their parents will react if they go to them with a tough issue. Among the reasons kids don’t go to their parents when something is bothering them, is that they don’t want to worry them (61%). Seven out of ten 8-11 year olds (67%), and 81 percent of 12-15 year olds, say they keep things secret from their parents at least some of the time.

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Survey Methodology

The *Nickelodeon/Talking with Kids National Survey of Parents and Kids* is a nationally representative survey of parents and their children age 8-15. The survey was designed by staff at Nickelodeon, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and International Communications Research (ICR) and conducted by telephone by ICR between December 7, 2000 and January 18, 2001.

A total of 1,249 parents of children age 8-15 and 823 children age 8-15 were interviewed for this survey, including oversamples of African Americans and Latinos. Depending on the preference of the respondent, interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. Certain questions were not asked of all age groups.

The margin of sampling error is $\pm 3\%$ for the total sample of parents, $\pm 4\%$ for the total sample of children, and may be larger for certain subsets represented in this analysis.

About the Partners

Nickelodeon, now in its 22nd year, is the number-one entertainment brand for kids. It has built a diverse, global business by putting kids first in everything it does. The company includes television programming and production in the United States and around the world, plus consumer products, online, recreation, books, magazines and feature films. Nickelodeon's U.S. television network is seen by nearly 80 million households and has been the number-one-rated basic cable network for more than five consecutive years. Nickelodeon and all related titles, characters and logos are trademarks of Viacom International Inc.

The Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent, national health philanthropy dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. The Kaiser Family Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Children Now is a nonpartisan, independent voice for America's children. Using innovative research and communication strategies, Children Now promotes pioneering solutions to problems facing America's children.

Talking With Kids About Tough Issues is a national campaign by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, established in 1995, to encourage parents to talk earlier (*before* adolescence) and more often with their children about "tough issues," including sex, violence, alcohol and drugs, and respect. The campaign offers free resources to parents by calling 1 800 CHILD 44 or visiting www.talkingwith-kids.org.

Through the new partnership with Nickelodeon, *Talking with Kids* now includes direct outreach to kids including fun activities to promote family talks at www.nick.com/your_world, as well as resources for parents at www.everythingnick.com. A free print guide for parents developed exclusively for the partnership is also available by calling the campaign's hotline.