

## TV AND YOUR CHILD

Make no mistake about it – television is an extremely powerful influence on your child. The average child watches TV for 4 hours a day. By twelfth grade, the average child has spent more time watching TV than in the classroom! You must take an active role in monitoring and controlling the impact TV has on your child.

### You can recognize that:

- TV exposes your child to staggering amounts of violence. The violence shown on TV has little consequence (the associated effects of pain and suffering are not shown) and is often shown as a way to settle conflict.
- TV exposes your child to sexuality and makes casual sex appear normal and risk-free. Rarely do characters on TV get AIDS, venereal diseases, or pregnant.
- TV exposes your child to irresponsible use of alcohol, again making this risky behavior seem normal and risk-free. Rarely do characters endure the effects of addiction or drunk driving.
- TV exposes your child to numerous commercials for unhealthy foods, leading to more requests for junk food and poor nutrition.
- Children who watch TV get less exercise and are more overweight.
- Children are the target of advertisements and used by companies to influence how you spend your dollars.
- Children who watch TV without parental censoring may have sleep problems, nightmares, and develop fears. This not only applies to scary shows but also to “reality” programs and the nightly news.

### You can also recognize that:

- TV can offer the opportunity to learn
- Subjects parents may find difficult to discuss are easily brought up in TV shows, giving parents an opportunity to begin talking to their children about sensitive matters.

### You can act by:

- Screen what your child watches. Ratings can help. Choose quality programs. Choose TV programs just as you would a movie. Record good choices for later viewing.
- Watch with your child so you can discuss what you have seen together; talk about what is right and wrong; talk about consequences and reality-vs-fantasy. Make a poor show an opportunity to learn.
- Limit the time your child watches TV. Remember that video games are, in many ways, similar to TV. Plan no more than one hour per day total. Discourage TV viewing for children under age two altogether.
- Do not put a TV in your child’s bedroom.

- Do not watch TV during meals.
- Do not keep the TV on in the background.
- Model responsible TV watching. Show your child how TV can be a valuable source of information. Limit your own TV time.
- As a parent, you can forbid certain shows. It is your responsibility to decide what your child sees and to enforce your decision.
- Teach your child to recognize advertisements and to resist them.
- Don't use TV as an answer to boredom.
- Call or write to TV stations that broadcast objectionable material. Call or write to sponsors too. Remember to compliment good programs as well.