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The 600 citizen-volunteer members of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) provide policy-making leadership to public education in the United States. Their efforts are designed to assure quality education to every child in every classroom in the states and territories.

NASBE believes that sound communication and decision-making skills are critical aspects of every child's journey toward informed, responsible adulthood. In working as education leaders, state board members recognize that a partnership exists among schools, parents and the communities. This publication is an example of two of these, the education and business communities, reaching out to the third, parents.

We hope that parents who use this guide will find it useful in creating effective parent-child communication and in helping children to learn to make sound decisions.

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~~This publication of the National Association of State Boards of Education was made possible by The Tobacco Institute, Washington, D.C.~~

~~The Tobacco Institute is an association of cigarette manufacturers who—as a matter of longtime policy and practice—believe that smoking is an adult custom. Simply put: The people who make cigarettes do not want young people smoking them. It is The Tobacco Institute's hope that this booklet will help parents deal with the full range of decisions adolescents face today.~~

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INTRODUCTION

Child raising has been a subject of debate among adults as long as there have been children. Almost every parent has opinions, or has heard theories about one of the most tenuous and difficult of family relationships: that between parent and adolescent.

You've probably said it yourself a hundred times. And you're right. Raising an adolescent is hard on the parent. But adolescence can be even more difficult for the youngster, who is trying to make the transition to young adulthood and is not quite sure how to handle it.

This is the time when your young teenager will be faced with many new decisions. Some decisions will be small, others important. Consider [the following examples: whether to drive the car, to drink, to smoke, to borrow money, to quit school, to take or quit a job, to marry.]

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Making responsible decisions is a skill that is best learned with the help of someone more experienced. With adult help, youngsters are more likely to make good choices.

Shared decision making begins with good communication between parent and child. Good communication skills help to strengthen the mutual respect and trust in the family. It is the objective of this booklet to help family members better understand each other, talk more easily and effectively to each other, and make more responsible decisions that are more agreeable to both parent and child.

This booklet is divided into three parts. Part I discusses what's involved for you and your child during the adolescent years. Part II suggests ways to develop more open lines of communication with your teenagers and to guide them in decision making. Part III includes materials designed to help you implement the ideas presented in the preceding sections—some "homework" for parent and child.