Parental Notification for the Body Piercing of Minors

The requirement that minors notify their parents, or have their permission prior to obtaining a body piercing has become an issue of interest to various state legislatures in recent years. Many states require such notification by law, while others do not. The piercing industry, in general, has expressed mixed sentiment, both in Vermont and in other states. Regardless of such legislation, many shops on both the local and national level, maintain a policy requiring such notification, or regulating what parts of a minor can be pierced, if any. The Association of Professional Piercers (APP), for its part, maintains professional guidelines that require parental consent for a minor to obtain a piercing, and prohibits the piercing of a minor’s nipples or genitals.

Representative State Legislation Regarding the Piercing of Minors

In January of 1999, the Maryland legislature passed SB218, which, with the exception of ear piercing, prohibits the tattooing and body piercing of a minor (Maryland State Senate SB218, 1999).

Texas passed a law in 1999 making it illegal for a person to perform body piercing on an individual younger than 18 years of age without the consent of a parent, managing conservator, or guardian of the individual. The consent must indicate the part of the person's body that may be pierced, must be written and notarized, the individual’s parent or guardian must be physically present at the piercing studio and show identification relating the minor with the parent or guardian (Texas State Senate SB61, 1999).

In 1998 the Governor of Oklahoma signed that state’s law requiring parental notification for the body piercing of minors. Minors must receive their parents' approval before they have their body pierced in Oklahoma and the parents have to be present while the actual piercing is taking place. However, ear piercing is not considered the same as body piercing in the legislation, therefore the Oklahoma Law does not affect the practice of ear piercing. The law also requires the Oklahoma Board of Health to develop rules for regulating the body piercing industry, including places where piercing can occur and the process of licensing piercers (Aspinwall 1998).
The Piercing Profession’s Position on Parental Notification

Regardless of the status of state laws, the opinion of many professionals seems to be mixed. In Missouri, where a parental notification bill has been passed, a piercer remarked upon passage of that state’s bill, “I'm for it, first of all because the body of a teenager can change a lot, and also because if you are under 18, you still depend on your legal guardians” (Moran 1997). Other piercers interviewed by the Vermont Legislative Research Shop felt that less state involvement is better (see following section).

Overall, many piercers seem to be of the mind that professional ethics have always mandated that minors have parental notification. Upon hearing of the passage of the California Bill prohibiting the piercing of minors without consent, a California piercer remarked, “Our policy for the past year has been that anyone 16 and under has to have their parent here with them, and they have to have a photo I.D. with their name and birth date on it, no exceptions” (Young, 1997).

The Association of Professional Piercers (APP), maintains a policy that “For any piercing of a minor, a parent or legal guardian must be present to sign a consent form. Proof positive, state issued photo identification is required from the legal guardian, and a bona fide form of identification from the minor,” and that “Under no circumstances is it acceptable or appropriate for a piercer to perform piercing on the nipples or genitals of an individual under 18 years of age.” The APP maintains this policy “Regardless of any local legislation being more lenient” (Association of Professional Piercers, 2002).

Policies of Body Piercing Shops in Burlington, Vermont

A total of five shops in Burlington were interviewed by the Vermont Legislative Research Shop to inquire as to their policies regarding the piercing of minors. One shop, The Wolf Den Tattooing and Body Piercing Shop was unable to be reached for comment. Additionally, another shop, Yankee Tattoo, stated that it does not perform piercings (Duval 2002). Thus, the results were limited to only three shops in Burlington, Body Art, Metropolitan, and Industrial Steel.

Body Art and Tattoo Studio

The Body Art and Tattoo Studio’s policy is to provide body piercing services to minors 18 and under only with parental consent. There are 4 requirements for the procedure to be done: the parent of the child must be present, with a valid drivers license, a birth certificate and a student identification card (Gina 2002).

Metropolitan Hair

It is the policy at Metropolitan Hair that a person under the age of 18 must have either a mother or father in the shop while the piercing is being done. It is also the policy of this shop is not to pierce any body part below the waist for minors. The reason for this strict policy according to
Walter Wood, a body-piercing expert at Metropolitan, is that “The kid is most likely still growing and this could harm their growth.” Wood added, however, “it is best not to regulate this type of policy” (Wood 2002).

**Industrial + Steel**

At Industrial + Steel, the policy is to not pierce minors unless a parent is present at the shop while the service is being done. They absolutely will not pierce below the waist for minors. In addition, the shop will try to counsel kids out of receiving body piercings. Regarding state action, Dan B. at the shop said, “little government involvement is best” (Burnj 2002).

**References**


Texas State Legislature, Senate Bill 61 section 146.0125 effective on September 1, 1999. [http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlo/billrch/subject/76r/S0032.HTM](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlo/billrch/subject/76r/S0032.HTM)


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