

### *Facts and Stats About Teen Sexuality*

- **Abstinence-only education:** The only way to prevent pregnancy and transmission of STI's 100% of the time, according to this approach, is abstinence. This means that students do not receive instruction on the correct use of contraception and condoms. Instead, abstinence education emphasizes the slim margin of failure rates for condoms and contraception, thereby ignoring the widely documented success rate for their properly applied use.
- **Comprehensive sex education** also emphasizes abstinence as the only way to prevent pregnancy and transmission of STI's 100% of the time, but students also learn about safe sex and contraception.
- **How much money does the government provide comprehensive sex education?** The Federal government has provided funding to abstinence-only initiatives exclusively. In one act, the Adolescent Family Life Act (1981), the government allotted \$11 million towards these programs. In 1996, the government then gave \$50 million more towards abstinence-only campaigns in schools under a revision of the Welfare Reform Act. In 2000, an additional \$19 million was given under the Adolescent Family Life Act, and in 2005, the government increased spending for abstinence-only education to \$170 million. **The amount of federal funds for comprehensive sex education campaigns is currently \$0.**
- **Does abstinence-only education work?** According to the Kaiser Institute, since funding for abstinence-only education began under the Welfare Reform Act, there has been no significant change in the rate of sexual activity among teenagers. In addition, individuals under the age of 25 have the highest rates of HIV infection over any other group. There is some evidence that shows that abstinence does delay sexual activity, but only for about 18 months from the completion of the abstinence program. By the age of 19, more than 50% of teens break their abstinence pledges. In addition, a Congressional report initiated by Representative Waxman of Maryland concluded that abstinence-only curricula contained scientific inaccuracies and false information about STI's.
- **In many developed countries, teen pregnancy rates have gone down,** due to changes in sex education curricula that include contraceptive education. According to Planned Parenthood, "The teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is at least twice that in Canada, England, France, and Sweden, and 10 times that in the Netherlands."
- **Does comprehensive sex education work?** Many leading health organizations such as the WHO, American Medical Association, and UNAIDS have found that teaching students about safe sex practices, in addition to abstinence, helps to delay first-time sex among teenagers. Likewise, students who use condoms for their first sexual experience are more likely to use condoms for subsequent sexual activity than those who do not, and comprehensive sex education teaches the effective use without encouraging sexual activity.
- **How is sex education taught across the country?** Only 22 states have sex education as mandatory for students, and 38 states have STI/HIV education as mandatory for students. In 37 states, there is an opt-out option for students for sex education, STI/HIV education, or both.
- **Does teaching about sexuality lead to sexual activity?** Many parents, school board members, and lawmakers believe that teaching students about alternatives to abstinence leads to increased sexual activity. These individuals, therefore, endorse programs that teach students that being abstinent is the only acceptable way to handle teenage sexuality and that there is no other way to prevent pregnancy and transmission of STI's. Comprehensive sex advocates believe that while being abstinent is the healthiest, safest choice that teenagers could make, they understand that it is not realistic to think that discussing abstinence, as the only alternative will lead to lower rates of teenage sexual activity. They therefore propose school programs in which abstinence is stressed, but safe sex alternatives are also taught for those students who do not practice abstinence.

#### Sources:

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3. Kaiser Family Foundation, U.S. Teen Sexual Activity, Jan 2005, <http://www.kff.org/youth/hivstds/sexeducation.cfm>
4. The Heritage Foundation, "Why Congress Should Reject The Failed Sex-Education Agenda in the Baucus Bill", Aug 2002, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Family/BG1576.cfm>
5. Representative Henry Waxman, Report on The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs.
6. Planned Parenthood, <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/pp2/portal/files/portal/medicalinfo/teensexualhealth/fact-abstinence-education.xml>