



# Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Adolescent sexual health issues, like teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), must be addressed with complex prevention efforts including comprehensive sexuality education that is developmentally appropriate for all ages throughout the educational experience. Comprehensive sexuality education includes medically accurate and developmentally appropriate information on abstinence and contraception.

## Comprehensive Sexuality Education Works

- Research shows that comprehensive sexuality education is effective in providing adolescents with the tools, knowledge, skills, attitude and values to make responsible choices about their sexual health.<sup>1</sup>
- Comprehensive sexuality education programs that discuss both abstinence and contraception, including condoms, do not increase sexual activity among teens; rather, such programs often delay first intercourse, reduce the frequency of sex and reduce the number of sexual partners.<sup>1</sup>
- In recent years, the decline of teen pregnancy rates has been attributed in part to an increase in abstinence among adolescents, but to a greater degree to an increase in contraceptive use.<sup>2</sup>

## Minnesotans Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- Seven out of 10 Minnesota adults believe that sexuality education should include both abstinence and contraception.<sup>3</sup>
- Nine out of 10 Minnesotans support comprehensive sexuality education in high schools; eight out of 10 Minnesotans support comprehensive sexuality education in junior high schools.<sup>3</sup>
- Eight out of 10 Minnesota parents reject the idea that teaching both abstinence and contraception encourages young people to have sex.<sup>3</sup>

## Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education Does NOT Work

- Abstinence-only-until-marriage education offers abstinence as the only option, does not include any information on contraception or prevention of STIs, relies on scare tactics and overstates contraception failure rates, and does not provide young people with information they will need for healthy lives.
- The only research on abstinence-only-until-marriage education programs found an increased number of young people had sex and that fewer used contraception.<sup>4</sup>
- Abstinence-only-until-marriage education imposes only one set of values as morally correct regardless of family composition, cultural experience, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.
- Abstinence-only-until-marriage education can shame and fail to address young people who have been sexually abused or sexually assaulted.
- Research from the Texas Department of Health found abstinence-only sex education programs have had little impact on Texas teenagers' behavior.<sup>5</sup>



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## What Can YOU Do to Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education?

- Call, write or meet with your MN representative and senator and tell them you support comprehensive sexuality education.
- Educate adolescents, parents and other adults about comprehensive sexuality education and encourage them to contact their legislators.
- Contact Teenwise Minnesota to find out how you can become involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Kirby, D. Emerging answers: research findings on programs to reduce teen pregnancy. Washington D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Darroch, JE and Singh, S. Why is teenage pregnancy declining? The roles of abstinence, sexual activity and contraceptive use. Occasional Report, New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999; 1.

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota Sexuality Education Survey. MN Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Kirby, D., Korpi, M., Barth, RP., Cagampang, HH. Evaluation of Education Now and Babies Later (ENABL): Final Report, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser Daily Reproductive Health Report. Abstinence-only sex education programs have little effect on Texas teenagers' behavior, study says. Texas Department of Health, 2005.

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