

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Planned Parenthood of Illinois Asks: DO YOU GYT?**

### ***Planned Parenthood of Illinois Joins MTV, Kaiser Family Foundation, and the CDC to Urge Young People to GYT: Get Yourself Talking and Tested***

In response to the staggering rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among youth in the U.S., Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) is working with MTV, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to kick off National STD Awareness month with the return of the award-winning campaign, GYT: Get Yourself Tested.

As many as one in two sexually active young people will contract an STD by age 25 — and most won't know it<sup>1</sup>. Reports have shown that Illinois is particularly at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). According to a 2008 CDC study, Illinois ranks 7<sup>th</sup> among 50 states in syphilis and chlamydia cases, and 11<sup>th</sup> among 50 states in gonorrhea cases.

"GYT encourages Americans under age 25 to talk with health care providers and partners about getting tested for STDs," said Beth Kanter, Senior Vice President of External Affairs. "According to the CDC, this age group represents half of the estimated 19 million cases of STDs occurring in the United States each year. When left untreated, STDs can lead to an increased risk of HIV infection, infertility and cancer."

As part of GYT, Illinois youth will be directed to Planned Parenthood of Illinois' 17 participating health centers for comprehensive STD testing and treatment.

PPIL's Teen Awareness Groups (TAG) in Bloomington, Champaign and Decatur will also be hosting educational sessions on STDs at local high schools and colleges throughout the month of April. These high school peer educators will also be creating videos about GYT to blitz on YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter.

Students from PPIL's Advocates for Choice college groups will also be participating in GYT by hosting campus condom crawls at Northern Illinois University, Illinois State University and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to raise awareness about the importance of condom use in STD prevention.

Both groups will be hosting viewing parties to show mtvU's *Dean's List*, which will follow a college freshman as she gets tested at a Planned Parenthood health center. The episode dispels myths about STDs and testing, and talks to young people about why it's important to GYT in college today.

"It's critical that young women, men and teens know how to protect themselves against STDs," said Kanter. "PPIL's TAG students and Advocates for Choice groups are using GYT as an opportunity to start conversations about STDs and encourage their peers to get tested."

Playing off mobile and Web slang in young people's everyday vernacular, such as "OMG" and "LOL," GYT is an easy way for young people to talk about sexual health and getting tested for STDs. This year, GYT is rolling out a series of new initiatives on-air, online, and on the ground at college campuses and in more than 4,000 health centers and clinics across the nation, including

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<sup>1</sup> Cates JR, Herndon NL, Schulz S L, Darroch JE. (2004). *Our voices, our lives, our futures: Youth and sexually transmitted diseases*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

- **Celebs Talk GYT** — In a series of on-air and online promotions, celebrities including Keri Hilson, Debi Nova, Emily VanCamp of *Brothers and Sisters*, Iyaz, and more join the campaign's cast of all-star pop culture personalities spreading the GYT message far and wide.
- **[GYT NOW Campus Challenge](#)** — To spur a social movement for students to start talking and to get tested on college campuses around the country, the "GYT NOW Campus Challenge" calls on young people to commit to getting tested by becoming a fan of GYT, and encouraging their peers to do the same. The campus with the largest percentage of their student network to join the GYT Campus Challenge will be featured in an MTV News special and highlighted on mtvU. Additionally, MTV will award each of the top 10 recruiters on the winning campus with an expense-paid trip for two and backstage passes to the *Too Fast for Love* Tour with Cobra Starship, Travie McCoy of Gym Class Heroes and others.
- **GYT Nation** — An extensive on-the-ground outreach effort is taking GYT to communities cross the country. GYT promotional materials, including T-shirts, posters, buttons, and stickers are being distributed to more than 4,000 health centers nationwide, including Planned Parenthood's network of more than 840 health centers. The CDC is also working with state and local health departments, the American Social Health Association (ASHA) and the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) to get out information about the campaign. And, the American College Health Association (ACHA) has joined the GYT campaign to spread the word and distribute GYT materials through college health centers.

The campaign's website, [GYTNOW.org](http://GYTNOW.org), provides a community tool kit with promotional materials that can be customized and localized for easy distribution. In this online gallery, the audience can flex their creativity and make "GYT" their own by uploading personalized GYT designs.

- **[www.GYTNOW.org](http://www.GYTNOW.org)** — The central hub of the campaign, [GYTNOW.org](http://GYTNOW.org) is a comprehensive information resource that includes facts about STDs; talking tips on how to discuss STD testing with partners, parents, and health care providers; and a testing location finder that connects users to local testing resources by simply entering a zip code. A wide range of GYT-based content, including all of the participating artists and celebrities, are also showcased on the site. Additionally, fans can connect to GYT via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).
- **GYTNOW short code and MTV Movie Awards Sweepstakes** — A mobile companion to [GYTNOW.org](http://GYTNOW.org), the GYT short code (498669) provides details about local testing locations to mobile phones by simply texting a zip code. Users of the service during the month of April will become eligible to win a trip for two to the 2009 MTV Movie Awards in LA. Users can also enter the sweepstakes online by using the testing location finder at [GYTNOW.org](http://GYTNOW.org).
- **MTV News** — MTV News Correspondent Sway Calloway goes inside a New York City college to talk to students about STD testing. The segment explores who is getting tested, who is not, and the reasons why young people don't get tested. Dr. Michelle Cespedes, a doctor of infectious diseases at NYU, and Dr. Michelle Callahan, a relationship expert and on-air personality, will weigh in on the importance of knowing your status and offer young people tips on talking about STD testing with partners and doctors.
- **mtvU Dean's List** — A freshman at the University of Hartford takes over as host for a new episode of *mtvU's Dean's List*. During this hour-long countdown of the music that's making an impact on her campus, the audience will also follow as Kayla gets tested at a Planned Parenthood health center, dispels myths about STDs and testing, and talks to young people about why it's important to GYT in college today.
- **MTV's "How To" Show** — Iyaz and Debi Nova explore "how to talk to your partner about testing," and "how to ask your doctor to be tested" in this short-form segment to live on [GYTNOW.org](http://GYTNOW.org).

GYT is supported by a broad range of organizations including the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD), American College Health Association (ACHA), ASHA (American Social Health Association) and various state and local health departments, colleges and universities, and other community groups and nonprofits.

To make an appointment to Get Yourself Tested at one of PPIL's 17 health centers, visit [www.ppil.org](http://www.ppil.org). For further information about the GYT campaign, visit [www.GYTNOW.org](http://www.GYTNOW.org).

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*Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) provides affordably priced high-quality reproductive health care services to women and families throughout Illinois. Through health care services, educational programs and advocacy efforts, PPIL works to ensure and protect the reproductive rights of each individual. For more information, visit [www.ppil.org](http://www.ppil.org).*