

*Since 1928, Planned Parenthood has worked in our region to make sure all people have the information and means to make healthy, responsible choices. We operate 28 clinics, providing affordable family planning services, basic reproductive health care, and comprehensive sex education to nearly 65,000 women and men each year. 2008 marks Planned Parenthood's 80th year of service in Minnesota.*

## The Case for Comprehensive Sex Ed

Teens need honest, straightforward information about reproductive health in order to protect themselves from unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STI), and HIV. Fully **9 out of 10 parents** believe comprehensive sexuality education should be part of Minnesota's overall effort to protect the health and safety of our young people.

Minnesota parents agree that young people should receive medically accurate information about abstinence *as well as* prevention. Local parents support comprehensive sex education in schools. Scientific evidence demonstrates that accurate, age-appropriate education paired with information about abstinence can help delay a young person's first sexual experience and can also help prevent pregnancy and infection by improving contraceptive use.

### The Problem: Abstinence-Only Education

The United States government has invested \$1.5 billion in abstinence-only education over the past eight years. These programs provide **no** information about how to prevent disease or pregnancy except to avoid having sex.

Rigorous research shows that abstinence-only programs **do not** delay the initiation of sexual activity, they **do not** cause sexually active teens to "return" to abstinence, and they **do not** decrease the number of sexual partners among young people.

Abstinence-only programs do not reduce the number of teen pregnancies or STIs. These programs do nothing to keep young people safe.

**Waxman Report** (2004). Fully **80%** of abstinence-only curricula contain **false, misleading, or distorted** information about reproductive health, including:

- Numerous scientific errors
- False and misleading information about contraceptive effectiveness
- Stereotypes about girls and boys that are treated as scientific fact
- Statements that blur religion with science

**Mathematica Report** (2007). When comparing abstinence-only participants with control group participants, researchers found:

- No overall reduction in teen sexual activity
- No difference in rates of unprotected sex among young people
- No real impact on knowledge of reproductive health

## Planned Parenthood's Approach:

We believe that all people have the right to understand how their bodies work. We also believe that young people are stronger and healthier when they have access to medically accurate sexuality education, affordable health care services, and opportunities to engage with their peers and in their communities.

We agree with Minnesota parents; young people should receive comprehensive sexuality education that includes information on a variety of topics, including reproductive anatomy, reasons to delay sexual activity, responsibilities associated with raising children, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, healthy and responsible relationships, pregnancy and birth, values clarification, and sexual identity.

**Comprehensive Family Life and Sexuality Education** means education in grades 7 - 12 that:

- Respects local community values
- Encourages family communication and parent-child connectedness
- Helps young people develop skills in communication, decision making, and conflict resolution
- Contributes to healthy relationships
- Provides education that is age appropriate and medically accurate
- Promotes responsible sexual behavior
- Includes information on both abstinence and contraception
- Promotes individual responsibility

**Every** reputable sexuality education organization in the United States, as well as prominent health organizations like the American Medical Association, has **denounced abstinence-only education programs** and **supported comprehensive sex education**.

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## Planned Parenthood Supports What Works.

Like **90% of Minnesota parents**, we believe in comprehensive sex education that includes strong, clear messages about abstinence as well as medically accurate information about reproductive health, contraception, and responsible decision making.

We offer **14** education programs for parents, teenagers, and community members that are grounded in research, not ideology. Our **Parent-Child Programs** support family communication and connectedness; our **Teen Councils and Youth Peer Education Programs** empower young people with the skills they need to make healthy choices, and our **Adult Lay Health Advisor Programs** teach adults how to be health care experts in their local communities. Planned Parenthood is firmly committed to addressing health disparities. We also provide culturally relevant education and outreach services among Latino, Asian, and African immigrant communities that is specifically designed to respond to cultural and linguistic barriers that often keep members of our communities from seeking the health care they need.

In 2007, Planned Parenthood provided comprehensive sex education to **more than 27,000 people** throughout our region.