

Sexually Transmitted Infections

In 2008, the number of sexually transmitted infections (STI) reached its **highest level ever** in Minnesota, with **17,650** cases reported statewide.

Although STI rates are highest in the City of Minneapolis, the largest increases occurred in Greater Minnesota. In 2008, chlamydia rates in Greater Minnesota and Twin Cities suburbs increased 11%. Almost 70% of all cases occurred in teens and young adults.

The Problem: Bad Public Policy

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. This leaves young people, who are at greatest risk of acquiring an STI, without the information or means necessary to protect themselves. On top of this, there is currently **no** state funding specifically allocated to address the growing STI epidemic in Minnesota.

Chlamydia. Chlamydia is the most commonly reported infectious disease in Minnesota. Rates of chlamydia have **more than doubled** over the last 13 years, and have especially impacted young people, communities of color, and American Indians. In the past year, the chlamydia rate increased by 7% overall, with a 10% increase among males. Racial disparities persist, with the incidence rate among black Minnesotans 16 times that among white Minnesotans. Untreated chlamydia may lead to infertility.

Gonorrhea. Over the past decade, gonorrhea incidence has steadily increased among Minnesotans. The past year saw a decrease in the incidence rate statewide, with only Greater Minnesota reporting an increase. Large disparities in gonorrhea rates by race, ethnicity, and geography persist. African Americans in Minnesota have a rate 40 times higher than whites.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is not a reportable disease in Minnesota. However, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that **1 in 4 teen girls has an STI**, and in most cases, it is HPV. As many as **80%** of sexually active people will acquire HPV at some point in their lives.

More than 100 strains of HPV have been identified, and HPV has been implicated as **the primary cause of cervical cancer**. The Gardasil vaccine, designed to prevent four of the most common types of HPV, has been a significant advancement in reducing the risk of cervical cancer for young women. Unfortunately, the high cost of this vaccine makes preventing cervical cancer out of reach for many Minnesota families.

Since 1928, Planned Parenthood has worked in our region to make sure all people have the information and to make healthy, responsible choices. We operate 27 clinics, providing affordable family planning services, basic reproductive health care, and comprehensive sex education to nearly 64,000 women and men each year. 2009 marks Planned Parenthood's 81st year of service in Minnesota.

Planned Parenthood Supports What Works.

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 sex education, affordable health care services, and opportunities to engage in serving their communities.

We agree with Minnesota parents; young people should receive comprehensive sex 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; and values clarification.

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**.

Planned Parenthood's Approach.

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 **9** education programs for parents, teens, 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 2008, Planned Parenthood staff provided education and outreach to **nearly 27,000 people** throughout our region.