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November 7, 2007

Contact: Mary O'Shea 216-961-8804 ext 1209

New Study Supports Comprehensive Sex Ed Programs

No Abstinence-Only Programs found to be effective

Cleveland OH —A report released today by Douglas Kirby, Ph.D. and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy offers the best evidence so far of which programs are effective in reducing teen pregnancy, and states that “at present, there does not exist any strong evidence that any abstinence program delays the initiation of sex, hastens the return to abstinence, or reduces the number of sexual partners.” On the other hand, two-thirds of the 48 comprehensive programs that supported both abstinence and the use of condoms and contraceptives for sexually active teens had positive effects on behavior. “In sum, studies of abstinence programs have not produced sufficient evidence to justify their widespread dissemination,” Kirby said.

The report, *Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases* is part of the National Campaign’s “Putting What Works to Work” Program. The report is the third in a series on sex education curricula from Kirby. He is also the author of *No Easy Answers* and *Emerging Answers*.

Tara Broderick, CEO of Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio, said “We are delighted to have Dr. Kirby’s report confirm that we are right on target with what we are offering to teens in Northeast Ohio.” Several of the curricula offered by Planned Parenthood and other local providers appeared on the list of programs with strong evidence of positive impact on sexual behavior, or pregnancy or STD rates.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the nation's largest network of sex education providers, called on Congress to stop funding abstinence-only programs that do nothing to help teens prevent unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

“As the mother of two teenagers, I want my kids to be taught about abstinence, but I also know that that’s not enough,” said Cecile Richards, President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America. “Teens look to us for information about preventing disease and unintended pregnancy, yet our government spends \$1 billion on abstinence-only programs to teach our teens that condoms don’t work. Is it any surprise that nearly four million teens develop sexually transmitted infections each year, when we don’t equip them with even the most basic information about how to protect themselves?”

Americans overwhelmingly support teaching comprehensive sex education rather than abstinence-only in schools. A recent Hart Research poll showed 76 percent of voters — and a majority of Democrats, Republicans, those in red states and blue states — want comprehensive sex education for their teens.

“We ask our teens to be responsible, but then we take away the tools they need to make responsible decisions about their sexual health. It's time for Congress to stop wasting money and start putting teens and parents first by funding comprehensive sex education programs that include messages about both prevention and abstinence,” Richards continued.

The report, titled *Emerging Answers 2007*, is the third in a series on sex education curricula from Kirby. He is also the author of *No Easy Answers* and *Emerging Answers*.

A 2005 report released by Dr. Scott Frank, Director of Public Health at the Case School of Medicine, examined the accuracy of federally funded abstinence programs in Ohio, and concluded that the programs “contain misleading and false information, scientific errors, and substantial inaccuracies regarding gender stereotypes, STD, and contraception.” Furthermore, the report concludes that the “organizations using these curricula exclude various high-risk youth populations, do not represent the views of the majority of parents, and often do not have the credentials necessary to teach sexuality education.”

Last week, Colorado became the 13th state to reject federal funding for abstinence-only programs. Governors across America, from Montana to Massachusetts, have rejected Bush administration funding for abstinence-only programs, citing them as harmful and misleading. Ohio rejected the funding this year.

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Planned Parenthood of Northeast Ohio is a recent consolidation of Planned Parenthood of Greater Cleveland, Planned Parenthood of North Central Ohio, Planned Parenthood of Stark County, Planned Parenthood of Summit, Portage and Medina Counties, and Planned Parenthood of the Mahoning Valley. We provide medical services to more than 57,000 people and sexuality education to thousands more in 21 counties.