



Abstinence Education: Setting the Record Straight

Parents Strongly Support Abstinence Education.

- **8 out of 10 parents think it's important for their teen to wait until they're married to have sex.**¹
- **Parents prefer abstinence education over comprehensive sex education 2 to 1.**²
 - Once they understand what abstinence education actually teaches, 6 out of 10 parents would rather their child receive abstinence education vs. comprehensive sex education. Only 3 out of 10 prefer comprehensive.
- **8 in 10 parents want schools to emphasize promoting abstinence over contraceptive use, which is the fundamental approach of abstinence education.**³
 - In contrast, typical comprehensive programs spend less than 5% of course time promoting abstinence while the majority of the time is spent promoting contraceptive use.⁴
- **At least 8 in 10 parents support the distinct, core teaching components of abstinence education,⁵ which include educating teens about:**
 - Developing healthy relationships to improve their chances for a healthy future marriage.
 - Increasing self-worth and self-control as methods for reducing premarital sexual activity.
 - How an unplanned pregnancy and/or STD can negatively affect a teen's future physically, financially, and emotionally.
 - The benefits of renewed abstinence to sexually experienced students.
- **Parents overwhelmingly support the abstinence education approach toward discussing contraception.**
 - 9 out of 10 parents think teens should be taught how often condoms fail to prevent pregnancy based upon typical use.⁶
 - Over 9 out of 10 parents think that teens should be taught the limitations of condoms in preventing specific STDs.⁷

Abstinence Education Works.

- Nationwide there has been a 13% decrease in the percentage of teens who have ever had sex between 1991 and 2005.⁸
- Seven peer-reviewed, published studies show that abstinence education decreases sexual initiation, increases abstinent behavior among sexually experienced teens, and/or decreases the number of partners among sexually active teens.⁹
- The majority of the nationwide decline in teen pregnancies is attributed to increased abstinence.¹⁰

Most Parents Reject Comprehensive Sex Education.

- 2 out of 3 parents think that the importance of the "wait to have sex" message ends up being lost when programs demonstrate and encourage the use of contraception.¹¹
- 8 out of 10 parents think teens will not use a condom every single time.¹²
- 2 out of 3 parents say that promoting alternatives to sexual intercourse (such as showering together, mutual masturbation, etc., presented in some comprehensive programs) encourages sexual activity.¹³

Parents Want More Funding Given to Abstinence Education 3 to 1.¹⁴

- 6 out of 10 parents think more government funding should be given to abstinence education vs. comprehensive sex education. Only 2 out of 10 want more funding for comprehensive sex education.

¹ Zogby International Poll, April 2007.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Heritage Foundation, Rector, et al., "Comprehensive Sex Education vs. Authentic Abstinence" Washington, D.C., 2004.

⁵ Zogby International Poll, April 2007.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ CDC, YRBSS, *Trends in the Prevalence of Sexual Behavior*, 2005.

⁹ Reasons of the Heart, *American Journal of Health Behavior* (in press); Best Friends, *Adolescent and Family Health*, 2005;

Not Me, Not Now, *Journal of Health Communications*, 2001; Sex Respect/Teen Aid, *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 1992; Postponing Sexual Involvement (Abstinence Version), *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1990; For Keeps, *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 2005; Heritage Keepers, *Office of Population Affairs*, HHS, 2005.

¹⁰ Santelli, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2004.

¹¹ Zogby International Poll, April 2007.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.