

Why Kansas Teens and Parents Need Abstinence Education

Nearly everyone agrees that teens in Kansas and across the country face more health risks than ever before as a result of sexual activity and other high-risk behavior. Teen sexual activity is costly, not just for teens, but also for society—for taxpayers. Skyrocketing rates of teen pregnancy, epidemic levels of sexually transmitted disease (STD's) and a host of related problems like depression, suicide and much more threaten the well-being and future of an entire generation. The question for parents and policymakers is—what to do about this crisis. **We believe the clear answer is Abstinence Education—an approach where teens are taught to *avoid* risky behaviors. Here's why.**



ABSTINENCE EDUCATION IS A LOT MORE THAN “JUST SAY NO TO SEX.”

Abstinence education (AE) focuses on the whole person: the physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs of teens. AE explores good decision-making, healthy relationship building, personal responsibility and other crucial life skills. The focus is on **primary prevention** connected to sexual activity as well as a wide range of other life decisions teens face everyday including alcohol, drugs, tobacco and pornography.

ABSTINENCE EDUCATION WORKS

Results of a rigorous study focusing on abstinence-only education conducted by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania made headlines last month. But the “Jemmott Study” is just the latest scientifically-based evidence proving abstinence education works. School-based abstinence education helps teens delay and reduce teen sexual activity and contributes to fewer sexual partners. Abstinence education offers primary prevention that is 100% effective against pregnancy, STD's and negative emotional consequences.



WHAT ABOUT SO-CALLED “SAFE SEX” PROGRAMS ENCOURAGING CONDOM USE?

“Safe sex” programs—sometimes called “comprehensive sex-ed,” is no more effective than “safe drinking” or “safe tobacco use.” Think about it. Is **really** low alcohol beer consumption is safe for teens? What about smoking just one or two low-tar cigarettes a day? This is just silly. The “safe sex” approach doesn't make sense either and sends teens a mixed message. After 25 years of research and more than 100 studies, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of promoting condoms. While condoms may help reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS, they do little or nothing to prevent many other STD's. Just this month, the American College of Pediatricians strongly endorsed abstinence-until-marriage sex education and recommended that all school systems adopt this approach in lieu of “comprehensive sex education”. Their position is based on “the public health principle of primary prevention – risk avoidance in lieu of risk reduction,” upholding the “human right to the highest attainable standard of health.” In other words, pediatricians want the best for teens—and so do we!



PARENTS AND TEENS SUPPORT ABSTINENCE EDUCATION



This is another “no brainer” we can all understand using plain old common sense. When parents are educated about the difference between AE and Comprehensive Sex-Ed. Twice as many prefer AE. Abstinence Education teaches kids the kind of values parents embrace: commitment, integrity and self-control. Let's be real, we understand many teens want to experiment with sex before marriage. But most teens who do so regret their behavior (which is why we encourage what's called “secondary virginity” in AE programs). Our permissive, sex-saturated culture exerts tremendous pressure on teens to avoid sexual activity, drinking, pornography, gang violence and other risky behaviors. Abstinence education supports the decision and commitments of teens who are virgins. Did you know that the proportion of virgin teens is actually growing, from 46% in 1991 to 54% in 2006. So don't believe those who say that teen sex is inevitable or that “everyone does it.” They don't!

PLEASE SUPPORT ABSTINENCE EDUCATION!