

September 5, 2006

Dear Superintendent of Schools:

In recent years, the number of schools teaching abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula has increased. Research shows that these programs are ineffective.<sup>i</sup> <sup>ii</sup> Abstinence-only curricula omit crucial information young people need to prevent pregnancy and protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). We urge you to evaluate your current life-skills and sexuality education curriculum and ensure that it provides medically accurate and unbiased information.

Abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula often misrepresent the effectiveness of contraceptives, giving teens the false impression that condoms neither protect against STDs nor prevent unintended pregnancy.<sup>iii</sup> This is particularly troublesome given that each year in the United States nearly 9.1 million 15-24 year olds are infected with an STD<sup>iv</sup> and more than 800,000 teenagers become pregnant.<sup>v</sup>

In short, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs do not work. Comprehensive sexuality education does. Comprehensive programs are supported by major medical and educational organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the National Education Association. In addition, public opinion polls consistently show that over 85% of Americans support comprehensive sexuality education over an abstinence-only approach, beginning in middle school.<sup>vi</sup>

Records indicate that some districts in Pennsylvania use problematic abstinence-only curricula as identified in a recent congressional report – including Choosing the Best; WAIT Training; Friends First/STARS; Me, My World, My Future; Sexual Health Today (Medical Institute for Sexual Health); Project Reality's Navigator; and A.C. Green's Game Plan.

We call on you as the superintendent of schools to ensure that the health and sexuality curricula in your district present medically accurate, age-appropriate, unbiased information about sex and sexuality. If you would like assistance identifying science-based sexuality education programs to use in your district, please contact Joe Fay at the Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy at 717.761.7380 x3100. The PCPTP can direct you to science-based educational programs that are recommended by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Thank you for your attention to this important public health matter.

Sincerely,

[see attached list]

Enclosed: "The Truth About Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs" Fact Sheet

P. O. Box 40008      Philadelphia, PA 19106      215.592.1513 x115

Joe Fay, Executive Director  
**Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

Ann Honebrink, M.D., Chair  
**Pennsylvania Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)**  
*Representing 1,800 Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Pennsylvania*

David Turkewitz, M.D., FAAP, President  
**Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics**  
*Representing 2,200 pediatricians practicing in Pennsylvania*

Richard L. Baird, Jr., President and CEO  
**Adagio Health Inc.**  
*Representing family planning and prenatal service providers in 23 counties and serving over 78,000 clients per year in western Pennsylvania*

Dorothy Mann, Executive Director  
**Family Planning Council, Philadelphia, PA**  
*Representing 29 family planning providers in five counties and serving 142,000 clients per year in southeastern Pennsylvania*

Cindy Stewart, President and CEO  
**Family Health Council of Central Pennsylvania**  
*Representing family planning and prenatal service providers in 24 counties and providing family planning services to over 54,000 clients per year in central Pennsylvania*

Bette Saxton, Executive Director and CEO  
**Maternal and Family Health Services, Inc.**  
*Representing family planning and prenatal service providers in 16 counties and serving over 38,000 clients per year in northeastern Pennsylvania*

Nancy Hopkins, Executive Director  
**American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania**  
*Representing 19,000 members in Pennsylvania*

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<sup>i</sup> Douglas Kirby, *Emerging Answers*, Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

<sup>ii</sup> David Satcher, *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior*, June, 2001.

<sup>iii</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control, "[l]atex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing the transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS." U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Male Latex Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (Jan. 2003). The CDC has likewise concluded that "latex condoms provide an essentially impermeable barrier to particles the size of STD pathogens." *Id.* at 2.

<sup>iv</sup> Hillard Weinstock et. al., *Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among American Youth: Incidence and Prevalence Estimates 2000*, 36 *Perps. on Sexual and Reprod. Health* (Jan./Feb. 2004).

<sup>v</sup> See, e.g., Alan Guttmacher Institute, *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by State Information* (Feb. 2004).

<sup>vi</sup> National Public Radio, *et al.*, *Sex Education in America*, General Public/Parents Survey, Jan, 2004.