

## Healthy Youth Act – AB 458

With teen birth rates rising for the first time in 14 years and sexually transmitted infections (STI) skyrocketing across the state, it is time to start taking Wisconsin youth and their health seriously. High rates of teen pregnancy and STI are crucial public health problems that result in poor health outcomes for young adults and children alike. We must support policies that give our young people the information and skills they need to make healthy decisions—now and throughout their lives.

To address this public health crisis in Wisconsin, the **Healthy Youth Act** ensures that schools who choose to teach sex ed are using curriculum proven to reduce risky behaviors that result in unintended teenage pregnancy and STDs.

### What is the Healthy Youth Act?

The **Healthy Youth Act** is a commonsense measure to improve the health of young people throughout Wisconsin.

- The bill requires Wisconsin schools that choose to teach sex education provide students with comprehensive information about healthy relationships and preventing unintended pregnancy and STDs.
- If schools teach sex education, it must include medically-accurate and age-appropriate information about abstinence, birth control and barrier methods to prevent unintended pregnancy and STDs. They must also teach teens about the life skills they need to say no to sex, to insist on contraception, and to communicate with parents and other trusted adults about these issues.
- In addition, the bill protects parents' rights by ensuring that if a school board chooses not to provide sex ed in one year.

### What Does Effective Sexuality Education Include?

Medically-accurate and age-appropriate, based on the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of a child, with the following components:

- ✓ Recognizing and preventing sexual abuse and dating violence
- ✓ Understanding the physical and emotional changes of puberty and adolescence
- ✓ Healthy relationships including family, friends and dating
- ✓ Healthy life skills, such as goal-setting, decision-making, and stress management
- ✓ How drugs and alcohol impair judgment
- ✓ The importance of abstinence as the only certain way to prevent unintended pregnancy and STDs
- ✓ How to prevent pregnancy and STDs through correct use of birth control and barrier methods

### Strong Support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- The American Association of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, American Psychological Association, American School Health Association, the Institute of Medicine and the Society for Adolescent Medicine all support comprehensive sex education programs.
- 87% of Wisconsin voters support requiring comprehensive sex ed instruction that includes information about both abstinence and contraception.
- 72% of parents of junior high school students and 65% of parents of high school students stated that federal government funding “should be used to fund more comprehensive sex education programs that include information on how to obtain and use condoms and other contraceptives” instead of funding sex education programs that have “abstaining from sexual activity” as their only purpose.

## Comprehensive Sex Education Reduces Teen Pregnancy and STI Rates

- Since 2000, the number of studies measuring the impact of comprehensive sex education programs has increased by 50% and the methodological rigor has greatly improved.
- According to Dr. Douglas Kirby, the nation's foremost expert on sex education and teen sexual behaviors, and his extensive multi-year review of sex ed programs—over 66% of the 48 comprehensive sex ed programs that have been rigorously evaluated had positive behavioral effects on teens.
  - ✓ 40% of programs delayed the initiation of sex, reduced the number of sexual partners and increased condom or contraceptive use
  - ✓ 30% of programs reduced the frequency of sex
  - ✓ 60% of programs reduced unprotected sex
- In a July 2005 policy report, the American Association of Pediatrics concluded that sexuality education programs must include both abstinence instruction and contraceptive instruction to be effective in reducing teen pregnancy and STI rates.
- The Healthy Youth Act ensures that Wisconsin schools provide sex ed programs that have proven successful in reducing unintended pregnancies and STIs.
- Until 2006, 86% percent of the decline in U.S. teen pregnancy rates was the result of improved contraceptive use, while a small proportion of the decline (14%) can be attributed to teens waiting longer to start having sex. (Guttmacher 2006)
- Research has been clear that comprehensive sexuality programs do not hasten the onset of sexual intercourse, do not increase the frequency of sexual intercourse, and do not increase the number of partners that teens have. (SIECUS Report, Aug/Sept 2001).

## The Immense Social Costs

- Teen moms are more likely to drop out of high school, remain unmarried and live in poverty for the decade following their pregnancy. In fact, children born to teen mothers are 9 times more likely to live in poverty.
- These children also are more likely to have lower cognitive development, to be incarcerated and to have an adolescent pregnancy themselves.
- The monetary costs, in terms of public dollars, are also great.
- Almost 90% of all teen births in Wisconsin are paid for by Medicaid.
- Unintended teen births also generate huge taxpayer burdens associated with the negative consequences of teen parents and their children—these include lost labor market activity, decreased educational attainment, and increased social services.
  - The average costs associated with a child born to a mother under 20 is \$1,707 each year.
  - The average costs associated with a child born to a mother under 17 is significantly greater, about \$5,133 per teen birth per year. (The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Wisconsin, November 2006.)

## The Statistics

### Teen Pregnancy Rates

- Approximately one third of young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20;
- In the U.S., there are approximately 750,000 teen pregnancies each year - over 80% of these pregnancies are unintended;
- A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant in one year;
- Teen birth rates are rising in Wisconsin and new data shows that a many WI counties have teen birth rates higher than the U.S. average:

Menominee	139 / 1000	Milwaukee	64 / 1000
Sawyer	58 / 1000	Adams	54 / 1000
Racine	49 / 1000	Rock	46 / 1000
Langlade	45 / 1000		

- The cities of Green Bay, Racine and Kenosha have teen birth rates almost double the national average.
- Urban areas, like Milwaukee, often bear the brunt of the negative consequences from teen pregnancy. Among the nation's 50 biggest cities, Milwaukee statistics are shocking:

7 <sup>th</sup> for infant mortality	15 <sup>th</sup> for low-birth weight babies
7 <sup>th</sup> for number of mothers under age 20	1 out of 3 children living in poverty

### Sexually Transmitted Infections

A 2009 study by the CDC found that 1 in 4 teens nationwide has at least one STI. STIs like Chlamydia are a serious public health problem—according to the CDC, they are the most common infectious diseases in America.

- Left untreated, gonorrhea and Chlamydia can lead to infertility, chronic pain, and potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy.
- Women bear the majority of the negative health consequences associated with STIs; and young women in particular are more susceptible to these infections.

The WI average rate for Chlamydia is 352 cases / 100,000 people. Wisconsin has the 23<sup>rd</sup> highest Chlamydia rate in the country; and Milwaukee has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest Chlamydia rate in the country (672 / 100,000).

However, among youth age 15-19, Chlamydia rates are exploding. This is not solely an urban problem; many rural counties have Chlamydia rates much higher than the WI average:

Brown	1439 / 100,000	Green Lake	1478 / 100,000
Menominee	2075 / 100,000	Forrest	1726 / 100,000
Adams	2037 / 100,000	Sauk	1418 / 100,000
Monroe	1627 / 100,000	Chippewa	1384 / 100,000

Almost 20% of new HIV infections in WI are among teens and young adults age 15-24.

STIs have a tremendous economic impact as well. In the United States, direct medical costs associated with STIs are estimated at up to \$14.1 billion annually. This total cost does not include lost wages and productivity, out-of-pocket expenses, or the costs associated with transmission of diseases to infants.