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Media Contact: Sara Finger
(608) 251-0139

Comprehensive Sex Education Essential to Young Women's Health

Teens Can No Longer Be Left in the Dark When it Comes to Their Health and Well-being

Madison – The Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) recognizes comprehensive sex education as the fourth key women's health issue during National Women's Health Week. Access to comprehensive, medically accurate, and age appropriate education is essential to improve the health of Wisconsin's young women.

"An estimated 750,000 teenagers are expected to become pregnant this year, and nearly four million will contract a sexually transmitted infection," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "It's clear our young people need information about both abstinence and birth control to help them make healthy decisions, to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and to have healthy and successful futures."

The American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, Institute of Medicine, and Society for Adolescent Medicine, among others, support comprehensive sex education, including education about *both* abstinence *and also* contraception and condoms. Despite this widespread support, more than \$1.5 billion federal and state dollars has been wasted in the last decade on dangerous abstinence-only programs that deny teenagers lifesaving information.

A 2008 [University of Washington study](#) demonstrated that students who receive comprehensive sex education, which included information about contraception use, were less likely to become teen parents than those who received abstinence-only information. This study, along with a plethora of other studies on the topic, shows that comprehensive sex education programs had a positive impact on reducing teen pregnancy and the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections.

Teen pregnancy has had a tremendous economic impact on young women and on taxpayers with only 40% of teenagers who have children before age 18 graduating from high school. Teen mothers are also more likely to live in poverty than women who delay childbearing, and more than 75 percent of all unmarried teen mothers go on welfare within five years of the birth of their first child.

"It's estimated that Wisconsin taxpayers have doled out \$156 million to cover the costs of teen childbearing," said Finger. "Teen pregnancy is a devastating, very costly, and a very preventable public health problem. Supporting comprehensive sex education policies will ensure that Wisconsin teens are not left in the dark and can be helped to transition from adolescence to adulthood safely and responsibly."

To learn more about comprehensive sex education, link to the [WAWH Teen Resource Page](#).

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org*