

Why the Healthy Teens Campaign?



The Healthy Teens Campaign is a broad-based coalition made up of education, public health, faith-based and other relevant organizations throughout the state that seek to improve the health and safety of Florida teens through comprehensive sex education. Florida currently has no statewide standards for teaching sex education. A recent University of Florida study identified the following inadequacies in sex education in Florida:

- Sex education is rarely afforded an effective amount of time.
- It occurs too late in students' academic careers (usually in 9th or 10th grade).
- There is little uniformity or standards (in terms of training or quality assurance).
- Sex education is not accessible to all students (especially Latinos).
- It fails to adequately address students' needs.

We know that too many Florida schools don't give students the facts they need and teachers are not receiving adequate training to teach sex education effectively. It's hard to think about the risks that Florida teens face, but it's a reality. In fact:

- Florida has the 2nd highest AIDS case rate in the country.
- Florida has the 6th highest syphilis rate of any state.
- Florida has the 6th highest teen pregnancy rate and each year 48,440 teens get pregnant in the state.
- In Florida, AIDS-related illnesses are the 9th leading cause of death for teens and teens report 31% of all newly acquired cases of sexually transmitted infections.
- In 2005, 12% of female high school students and 1 % of male high school students in Florida reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners.

Responsible comprehensive sex education programs do **not** increase sexual activity, but studies demonstrate they can help young people delay sexual activity and increase contraceptive use among those who are sexually active, as well as decrease the number of partners among those who are sexually active.

It is irresponsible to withhold information from teens that can protect them from unintended pregnancy and dangerous infections - and that may just save their lives. The public health evidence is overwhelming that abstinence-only programs do not work, and that comprehensive sex education prevents negative health outcomes for our teenagers.

The Need in Florida

As a result of abstinence-only programs, Florida teens either get no information or inaccurate information in their classrooms. All too often, then, teens rely on popular culture and peers for information about sex. Florida health educators detail the shocking myths that teens believe and repeat daily, such as drinking bleach to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission or a particular brand of soda to be used as birth control. Teens in Florida need access to the information, skills and encouragement that lead to responsible decision-making about sex. It is essential that policymakers support the Healthy Teens Campaign to ensure that teens receive this life-saving information from trusted, responsible sources.

NOTE: Public Schools/Human Sexuality Education (S.B. 220 by Deutch/H.B. 265 by Fitzgerald)

Creates the "Florida Healthy Teens Act." Requires public schools that provide certain information or programs to students concerning human sexuality to provide information that meets specified criteria. Provides a process to review compliance with such requirement. Authorizes parents and guardians to seek review of a school's compliance, etc. **BPW/FL SUPPORTS THIS BILL!**

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