

SPEAKING OUT!

*Connecticut's Parents &
Other Adults Want*

Comprehensive Sex Education In Schools

F A C T **94 percent** of Connecticut residents agree that, "In the era of AIDS, young people need information and skills from sex education to protect their health and lives."

F A C T **61 percent** of U.S. high school seniors have had sex.

F A C T **68 percent** of Connecticut high school seniors have had sex.

F A C T **7,420** teenage women in Connecticut experienced pregnancy in 2000.

F A C T **Connecticut** does not require schools to provide sex education.

WHAT WORKS—Comprehensive Sex Education or Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage?

F A C T Thirty years of research shows that youth who receive comprehensive sex education—including information on abstinence *and* contraception—are more likely to delay initiating sex and to use protection when they do initiate sex than youth who receive abstinence-only programs.

F A C T Numerous research studies have shown that sex education that includes information about *both* abstinence *and* contraception does NOT send a mixed message, nor does it lead to earlier or increased sexual intercourse.

DESPITE THE RESEARCH, federal and state governments steadily increased funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that tell young people that sex outside of marriage is “likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.” These programs also relate only the failure rates (often exaggerated) of condoms and other forms of contraception. To date, almost one **billion dollars** has been spent on such programs, none of which has been shown to be effective in preventing sexual risk behaviors. Research shows that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are far less effective than comprehensive sex education.

What the Survey Found

What Should Be Taught?

Connecticut adults overwhelmingly support comprehensive sex education in Connecticut’s schools—education that provides information about *both* abstinence *and* contraception, including condoms for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially when it comes to preventing HIV and AIDS.

- **94 percent** of adults agree that, “In the era of AIDS, young people need information and skills from sex education to protect their health and lives.”
- **94 percent** of Catholics and **93 percent** of all adults agree that, “Whether or not young people are sexually active, they should receive sex education so they have the information to make responsible choices.”
- **75 percent** of all adults believe schools should teach about *both* abstinence *and* contraception.

Does Information About Abstinence and Contraception Send a “Mixed Message”?

Connecticut adults’ opinions agree with the facts about sex education, as shown by research.

- **83 percent** *reject* the idea that “sex education only encourages young people to have sex.”
- **73 percent** *reject* the idea that “giving young people information about both abstinence and birth control in schools sends a mixed message and encourages young people to have intercourse.”

When Should Sex Education Be Taught?

Most adults believe that students should receive sex education in junior and senior high school.

- **91 percent** of all adults support youth receiving sex education during high school.
- **79 percent** of all adults support youth receiving sex education during junior high school.

Should Sexually Active Teens Have Access to Sexual Health Services?

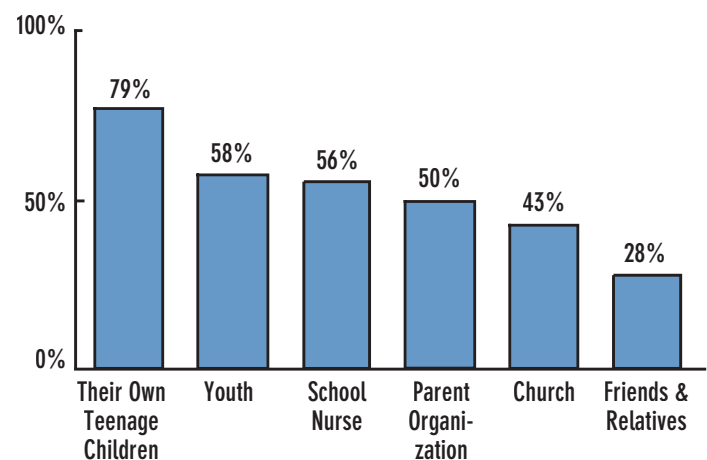
Most Connecticut adults believe school personnel should make condoms and other birth control available to sexually active youth. They also look to school nurses and guidance counselors to refer sexually active youth to STI and/or family planning clinics

- **84 percent** of Hispanic adults and **79 percent** of all adults support school nurses and guidance counselors referring sexually active youth to STI clinics.
- **69 percent** of adults support school nurses and guidance counselors referring sexually active youth to family planning clinics.
- **79 percent** of African American adults, **67 percent** of Hispanic adults, and **60 percent** of all adults support school personnel making condoms and other birth control accessible to sexually active youth.

Whose Opinions About Sex Education Matter the Most to Connecticut Adults?

Connecticut residents value most highly the opinions of their own teenage children, if they have any, and of young people in general. Adults also value the opinions of school nurses and parent organizations.

- **79 percent** of **parents of teens** say the opinions of their own children are *very important* to them.
- **58 percent** of **all adults** say the opinions of youth are *very important* to them.
- **56 percent** of **all adults** say the opinions of school nurses *very important* to them.
- **50 percent** of **all adults** say the opinions of parent organizations are *very important* to them.



Should Government Funding Support Abstinence-Only?

Most Connecticut residents oppose public funding of abstinence-only programs. Many say they would be likely to take action if they discovered that their child's school prohibits information about condoms and birth control.

- **59 percent** oppose current policy that funds teaching only abstinence and that prohibits any information about condoms and birth control to prevent pregnancy and/or disease.
- **77 percent** of African Americans, **62 percent** of whites, and **58 percent** of Hispanics say they would be likely to take action to support a change in school policies if they discover that their child's school prohibits information about condoms and birth control

Demographics of Survey Respondents—Among all survey respondents, 34 percent were parents of children under age 13; 19 percent were parents of children ages 13 to 18. Among respondents, 52 percent were ages 18 through 44. Nearly 75 percent of respondents were white; 11 percent, African American; 10 percent, Hispanic; and four percent, other. Forty-three percent of respondents were Catholic; 24 percent, Protestant; two percent Jewish; 17 percent, other; and 12 percent, of no religious preference. Nearly 32 percent were Democrats; 26 percent, Republicans; and 31 percent, independents. Fifty-three percent of respondents were female. Respondents who indicated their income were equally distributed among categories: about 29 percent each reported an annual income of \$40,000 or less; \$40,000 to \$80,000; and over \$80,000.

The Survey—APCO Insight, a public opinion research firm located in Washington, DC, conducted a survey of Connecticut residents on behalf of Advocates for Youth. The survey, measuring attitudes towards sex education, solicited the opinions of 699 randomly chosen adults across the state, including over-sampling of 100 adults each in Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and New Haven. Interviews, conducted by telephone, occurred between December 9 and December 16, 2003. The margin of error is ± 3.8 percent. The margin of error is larger for over-samples.

Assessing the State of Sex Education in Connecticut's Schools—Advocates for Youth and The Parisky Group in Hartford worked in partnership with parents throughout Connecticut to assess the state of sex education in their children's schools. That project, this separate survey, and this document were generously supported by a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Advocates for Youth

Advocates for Youth is dedicated to creating programs and advocating for policies that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. Advocates provides information, training, and strategic assistance to youth serving organizations, policy makers, youth activists, and the media in the United States and developing countries.

The Parisky Group

The Parisky Group provides a broad range of services to address social, community development, and public policy issues. Founded in 1983, The Parisky Group assists business, government, and nonprofit clients in tackling challenging problems and projects, finding both short- and long-term solutions to complex issues.

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