



## Comprehensive Sexuality Education

## Fact Sheet

### **Background**

Arizona's youth are at a higher risk than the nationwide average for pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. Comprehensive Sexuality Education and access to contraceptive services can help young people protect their health and well being.

In 1996, the Social Security Welfare Reform Act allocated federal monies for states to begin promoting abstinence-only until marriage. Arizona schools promote abstinence-only until marriage to our youth; between 1998 and 2003, Arizona appropriated \$12 million in state funds to support its abstinence-only-until-marriage program.<sup>i</sup> The state of Arizona continued to accept federal monies for abstinence-only education from 1998 to 2008.

Comprehensive sexuality education is defined as: evidence-based programming that starts in kindergarten and continues through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. These programs will include age-appropriate, medically accurate information on a broad set of topics related to sexuality, including human development, relationships, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention. This curriculum will provide students with opportunities for developing skills as well as learning information.

### **Arizona's youth population is at a higher than average risk for unsafe sex**

- 46% of Arizona high school students report being sexually active.<sup>ii</sup>
- Among those who reported being sexually active, 55% of Arizona youth reported using a condom during their last sexual encounter, this is significantly lower than the nationwide average of 68%. Of those surveyed, 15% reported using birth control pills.<sup>iii iv</sup>
- Almost 84,000 Arizona sexually active teens have expressed a need for publically-funded contraceptive services and supplies.<sup>v</sup>
- One out of four sexually active youth will contract an STI and nearly one out of 10 teenage girls, ages 15-19 will become pregnant.
- 23.4% of sexually active students used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sex.<sup>vi</sup>
- 12% of female high school students were forced to have sex when they did not want to.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Teens and STIs**

- In 2007, there were 14,472 cases of Chlamydia, 3,161 cases of Gonorrhea and 814 cases of Syphilis reported in Maricopa County. Through the first six months of 2008, there has been an 18% increase in Syphilis cases compared to 2007.<sup>viii</sup>
- Youth, ages 15 – 24, experience more than half of all the Gonorrhea and Chlamydia cases in Arizona.<sup>ix</sup>
- 50% of new HIV infections occur in people under age 25.<sup>x</sup>

## **Teen Pregnancy**

- Nearly 50 teens become pregnant in Arizona every day; a total of 18,156 last year.<sup>xi</sup>
- Arizona has the nation's third highest teen pregnancy rate<sup>xii</sup> Mexican/Latina teens are more than two times as likely to become pregnant as Caucasian teens, and nearly four times as likely to give birth.
- Arizona has one of the highest school dropout rates in the nation. The number one reason girls drop out is teen pregnancy<sup>xiii</sup>
- 95% of all teen pregnancies are unplanned<sup>xiv</sup>
- 84% of Arizona teens giving birth were unmarried<sup>xv</sup>

## **Teen Pregnancy and Poverty**

- 52% of all mothers on welfare had their first child as a teenager.<sup>xvi</sup>
- A child's chance of growing up in poverty is 27% higher if the mother gives birth as a teen.<sup>xvii</sup>
- Compared to teens from higher income families, poor and low-income teens are more likely to be sexually active and less likely to use contraceptives or to use contraception successfully. Poor and low-income adolescents make up 38% of all women ages 15 to 19; yet, they account for 73% of all pregnancies in that age group.<sup>xviii</sup>
- The cost to the United States associated with childhood poverty total about \$500 billion per year.<sup>xix</sup>

## **Prevention is fiscal common sense**

- On average, a child who spends most of his childhood in poverty will make, as an adult, 39% less than the median yearly earnings; contributing to an over slowing in GDP.<sup>xx</sup>
- 82% of teen births were paid for by government funds; the Arizona taxpayer cost for teen childbearing in 2004 was \$268 Million or \$3,822 per teen<sup>xxi</sup>
- The teen birth rate in Arizona declined 23% between 1991 and 2003. This progress in reducing teen pregnancy resulted an estimated savings of \$76 million in 2004 alone.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Sons born to adolescent mothers are 2.2 times more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>xxiii</sup>

## **States that implement a more comprehensive approach have seen a significant decrease in teen birth rates.**

- In Virginia, sexuality education must cover both abstinence and information about contraceptives. From 2000 to 2006 Virginia teen birth rates decreased 8.5%.<sup>xxiv</sup>
- Rhode Island's sexuality education programs have an emphasis on abstinence but include medically accurate information about contraceptives as well. In 2006 the state was one of only a handful in the country to see a significant decrease (11%) in teen pregnancy from the previous year.<sup>xxv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Hauser D. Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2004. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/stateevaluations.pdf>

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- iii Arizona Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Program. “2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results: Arizona High Schools Survey.” <http://www.azrapeprevention.org/statistics/2005AZYRBSa/2005YRBSTrendReport.pdf> This link is dead, and the updated 2007 survey link is broken.
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