

## Abstinence-Centered vs. Comprehensive Sex Education

| Area                                  | Abstinence-Centered  | Comprehensive  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Philosophy</b>                     | <p>1.) <b>Adolescent sexual activity is inherently risky</b>, based on medical facts that regardless of what precautions are taken, sexually active teens can still get pregnant, contract an STD, and/or experience emotional distress, any of which can jeopardize their health and futures.</p> <p>2.) Adolescents can make the healthiest choice - abstinence - if empowered with knowledge and skills.</p> <p>3.) Advocating abstinence - the best and healthiest choice for adolescents - should be the central message.</p> | <p>1.) <b>Adolescent sexual activity is not harmful as long as it is consensual and contraception is used.</b> There are no negative emotional consequences.</p> <p>2.) Adolescents will not choose abstinence. Teen sex is inevitable.</p> <p>3.) Advocating and demonstrating the use of contraception, especially condoms, should be the central message.</p> |
| <b>Content</b>                        | Spends <b>most of time promoting the value of abstinence</b> <sup>1</sup> , including goal-setting, healthy relationships, and refusal skills.   | Spends most of time promoting contraceptive use with little or no time (less than 5%) on promoting abstinence. <sup>2</sup><br><br>May promote non-intercourse "outercourse" sexual activities such as showering together and mutual masturbation as a means to avoid pregnancy.   |
| <b>Approach Toward Contraception</b>  | Educate about contraceptive options, including <b>the limitations</b> in preventing pregnancy and STD's.<br><br><b>Does not advocate or demonstrate</b> contraceptive use.   | Emphasizes the <b>effectiveness of contraception</b> (especially the condom) in preventing pregnancy and STDs, <b>with little to no discussion about the limitations.</b><br><br><b>Does advocate and often demonstrates</b> contraceptive use.  |
| <b>Parental Preference</b>            | 2007 Zogby Survey showed <b>parents prefer abstinence-centered education 2:1</b> over comprehensive education. <sup>3</sup><br><br>9 in 10 adults and teens say that they think it's important that teens be given a strong message about abstinence. <sup>4</sup>   | The majority of <b>parents reject this approach</b> when they understand the content. Sixty-six percent of parents think that the importance of the "wait to have sex" message ends up being lost when programs demonstrate and encourage the use of contraception. <sup>5</sup>   |
| <b>Annual Funding from U.S. Gov't</b> | \$0 <sup>6</sup>   | \$700 million <sup>7</sup>   |

<sup>1</sup> 5. Martin, S., Rector, R., Pardue, M.G(2004). *Comprehensive sex education vs. authentic abstinence*. Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Zogby Survey of Nationwide Parents of Children Age 10-16, May 2007

<sup>4</sup> National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.(2004) Fact sheet: Recent trends in teen pregnancy, sexual activity, and contraceptive use. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>5</sup> Zogby, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> FY 2010 Federal budget, as passed by Congress, December, 2009, in which all \$150 million of funding previously dedicated for abstinence education was eliminated.

<sup>7</sup> Estimate based on FY 2010 federal budget for new Teen Pregnancy Prevention, together with continued funding for "Comprehensive" sex education as detailed in: US Dept of Health and Human Services (2008, December). *Health and Human Services Funding for Abstinence Education, Education for Teen Pregnancy and HIV/STD Prevention, and Other Programs that Address Adolescent Sexual Activity*. Washington, DC. Estimate represents an increase of \$100 million vs. prior year.