

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

Division of General Pediatrics & Adolescent Health

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School of Medicine

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Dear Minnesota Legislator:

Below you will find a brief that provides key insights from research on sexual health education with middle school and high school students.

As Minnesotans, we share the goal of sustaining strong and vibrant communities that support the health and healthy development of young people, parents and families across the state.

As a group of researchers, clinicians, and educators in the field of adolescent health – representing the Prevention Research Center, Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, School of Nursing and School of Public Health – we work towards this goal by investigating programs and practices that support young people in making healthy choices and decisions.

Charged with translating research to practice, we offer data from both Minnesota parents and from young people across the U.S., to inform your decisions on pending legislation regarding school-based sexual health education.

The research featured in this brief shows that:

- Parents throughout Minnesota overwhelmingly support comprehensive sexual health education for their children;
- Comprehensive sexual health education effectively teaches about consent and healthy relationships;
- Comprehensive sexual health education changes behaviors in ways that reduce risk for teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

We are committed to the critically important work of supporting the health and well-being of Minnesota young people and families – please let us know if we can assist you in any way.

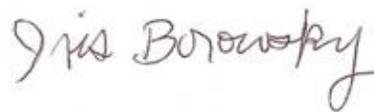
Sincerely,



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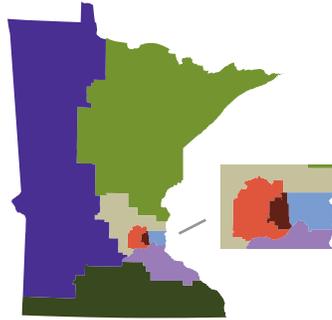


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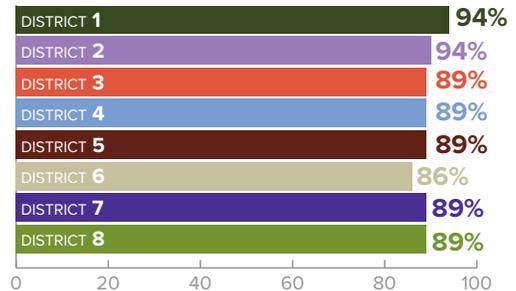
RESEARCH SUPPORTS COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

1 Parents – from all parts of Minnesota – support comprehensive sexual health education for their children.¹

Parents from all eight Minnesota congressional districts overwhelmingly support sexual health education that includes abstinence as well as prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



Percentage of parents supporting sexual health education by congressional district



2 Comprehensive sexual health education teaches consent and healthy relationships.^{2,3}

Teaching consent works.

Comprehensive sexual health education reduces high risk sexual behaviors, a risk factor for sexual violence victimization and perpetration. Comprehensive sexual health education teaches about communication, sexual respect, safe dating, and healthy relationships skills.²

Teaching consent can reduce sexual violence.

Comprehensive sexual health education in middle school and high school may have protective effects that extend well past graduation. Research shows that students who had sexual health education classes that included specific refusal skills had a lower risk of experiencing sexual assault during college.³

50% *Young women who received comprehensive sexual health education in high school were 50% less likely to experience sexual assault in college.*

3 Comprehensive sexual health education is effective.⁴

Comprehensive sexual health education programs are proven to:

- ✓ help youth wait until they are older to begin having sex
- ✓ reduce the frequency of sexual activity
- ✓ reduce the number of sexual partners
- ✓ increase condom and contraceptive use

Abstinence-only programs have:

- ✗ NOT been proven effective in lowering teen pregnancy or STI rates
- ✗ NOT been shown reduce the number of sexual partners
- ✗ NOT reduced unprotected sexual activity

Evidence from over three decades of evaluation research is clear: Comprehensive sexuality education changes behaviors linked to teen pregnancy and STIs.

PRC

Healthy Youth Development
Prevention Research Center

Healthy Youth Development – Prevention Research Center

For over 30 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has worked to eliminate health disparities and create healthy communities by funding Prevention Research Centers (PRCs) throughout the United States.

The Healthy Youth Development Prevention Research Center, housed at the Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota, is one in a network of 26 academic centers whose main objective — as a PRC — is to link science to practice through collaborations with public health agencies and community-based organizations.

Learn more:

www.prc.umn.edu
www.cdc.gov/prc/

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Adolescent Health at the University of Minnesota

The investment Minnesotans make in the health and well-being of young people strengthens our community — now and for the future.

During adolescence, young people are actively exploring their identity and how to connect with others. Learning what it means to have positive, healthy relationships is a critical developmental accomplishment that supports young people's contributions to work, family and community life.

Understanding how best to support young people during adolescence is the focus of researchers at the University of Minnesota's Prevention Research Center. Staff at the PRC contribute to the scientific discourse and work with health and education agencies through federally funded, community-partnered programs and research.

This fact sheet offers key insights from our work with Minnesota adolescents, parents, and teachers about the experiences adolescents have — including evidence-based sexuality education — that contribute to their health and well-being.

Much research is available on this topic. This brief reflects that research and our understanding that addressing young people's developmental needs is the best way to support them in making healthy choices and decisions.

Contact us for copies of our published research or to learn more about our work.

Suggested citation: Farris, J., Oliphant, J., Delehanty, E., Denight Kelly, E. (2019). Research Supports Comprehensive Sexual Health Education. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Healthy Youth Development • Prevention Research Center.

References

¹ Eisenberg ME, Bernat DH, Bearinger LH, Resnick MD. Support for Comprehensive sexuality education: Perspectives from parents of school-age youth. *J Adolesc Health*. 2008; 42: 352–35911. <https://www.pediatrics.umn.edu/sites/pediatrics.umn.edu/files/what-do-parents-think.pdf>

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³ Santelli JS, Grilo SA, Choo T-H, Diaz G, Walsh K, Wall M, et al. (2018) Does sex education before college protect students from sexual assault in college? *PLoS ONE* 13(11): e0205951. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205951>

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