

No Time for COMPLACENCY

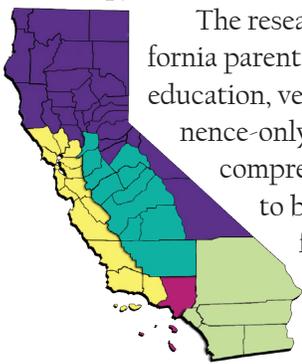
POLICY REVIEW

2007 SPRING ISSUE

California parents overwhelmingly support comprehensive sex education

A new study by the Public Health Institute's Center for Research on Adolescent Health and Development has found overwhelming support among California parents for school-based comprehensive sex education. Of the nearly 1,300 parents polled in every region of California, a solid 89 percent supported comprehensive sex education. This strong support was seen regardless of parent's political leanings, religious affiliations or location.

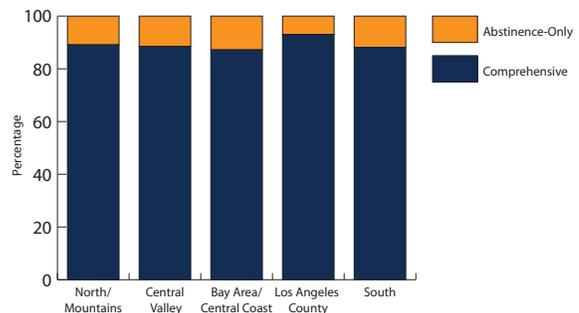
In this first ever survey of California parents devoted exclusively to sex education and sexual health services issues, a regionally stratified (see map) random sample of 1,284 English- and Spanish- speaking California parents were questioned. Parents were asked about preferences for comprehensive versus abstinence-only sex education, opinions on specific sex education topics, and reasons for preferences and opinions. The study, by PHI scientists Norman Constantine, Petra Jerman, and Alice Huang, will be published later this year in the journal *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*. (To request a pre-publication copy of this article, please e-mail pjerman@phi.org.)



The researchers found that 89% of California parents support comprehensive sex education, versus 11% who support abstinence-only sex education. Support for comprehensive sex education was found to be highly consistent across the five social-geographic regions sampled, ranging between 87% and 89% in all regions except Los Angeles County, where

93% of parents supported comprehensive sex education (see chart). In addition, large majorities of parents from all racial/ethnic groups, both genders, both languages, all income and educational levels, all religious denominations including evangelical Christians, and all political affiliations supported comprehensive sex education.

PREFERENCE FOR COMPREHENSIVE VS. ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEX EDUCATION BY CALIFORNIA REGION



The results of this study directly challenge the common framing of the sex education debate as a conservative versus liberal battle. Instead, the researchers conclude, the conflict can be better characterized as one between a small and vocal organized political minority, and a very large pragmatic majority who prioritize harm-prevention and hold diverse political and religious views. For further discussion of this conclusion, please see <http://tinyurl.com/37ud6y>. For more information on the study, go to <http://teenbirths.phi.org>.

Legislative update: AB 629

The Sexual Health Education Accountability Act (AB 629, Brownley, D-Woodland Hills) passed the Assembly Health Committee on March 27, 2007. Its next stop is the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Currently, the 2003 California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act (SB 71) requires all sexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention

education in California public schools to be medical accurate, age-appropriate, and comprehensive (<http://tinyurl.com/lok1k>). AB 629 would extend this requirement to state-funded and administered teen pregnancy and STD prevention programs provided in communities outside of school. To check the current status of this bill, go to <http://tinyurl.com/yuu9mw>.

State funding for teen pregnancy prevention

California's high teen birth rate is declining at a faster pace than are rates across the rest of the nation, as the State of California continues to make strong investments in teen pregnancy prevention programs and services. These state-administered programs are supported by a combination of state and federal funds. The amounts provided below are the latest available immediately following the May 15 release of the Governor's revised budget for 2007-2008.

Of the four Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) community programs administered by the Department of Health Services (DHS), Office of Family Planning (OFP) (<http://tinyurl.com/r4e6n>), two are budgeted at their 2006-2007 levels: the Community Challenge Grant Program (\$18.5 million) and TeenSMART Outreach (\$1.8 million). The other two programs are slated for reduced funding – Information and Education is budgeted to be cut 56% (reduced to \$1.4 million), and the Male Involvement Program is earmarked for a 13% cut (reduced to \$2 million).

The State's largest reproductive health program, Family PACT, provides clinical services at no cost to low-income adolescents and adults (www.familypact.org). Family PACT received approximately \$438 million in combined federal and state funding for 2006-2007, with approximately \$87.6 million (20%) of this total used to serve teens. For 2007-2008, the Family PACT budget is \$451 million in combined federal and state funding. Additional state funding of \$20 million has been newly allocated by the governor for the Medi-Cal Minor Consent Program, which provides confidential sexual health, drug and alcohol, and mental health services to minors under age 21. This state funding will free the program from new restrictions associated with its current federal Deficit Reduction Act funding.

Additional state-administered programs provide important secondary prevention education, health, and social services to pregnant and parenting teens. The Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP; <http://tinyurl.com/qz9ab>), is designed to ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes for teen mothers and infants, and reduce the incidence of subsequent teen births. AFLP is currently budgeted at its 2006-07 level of \$19.2 million, down 12% from 2005-2006. CDE's California School-Age Families Education program (Cal-SAFE; <http://tinyurl.com/mzwbm>) is designed to increase support services for expectant or parenting students to improve academic achievement and provide a quality child care programs for their children. Cal-SAFE is currently budgeted at \$58.2 million, a 10% increase from 2006-07. The Cal-Learn program (<http://tinyurl.com/lfgou>), helps pregnant and parenting teens attend and graduate from high school. Cal-Learn is budgeted at \$29.8 million, a 15% increase from 2006-07.



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The *No Time for Complacency* Policy Review is a biannual series of reports on the adolescent sexual health policy environment in California. The series is produced as part of PHI's Adolescent Sexual Health Policy Project. Policy Reviews are issued in the spring and fall of each year.

The Adolescent Sexual Health Policy Project is funded in part by a grant to the Public Health Institute from The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF). Created in 1992 as an independent, private foundation, TCWF's mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education, and disease prevention programs. For more information on *No Time for Complacency* and the Adolescent Sexual Health Policy Project, please go to <http://crahd.phi.org>.

Federal abstinence-only funding to lapse

Federal funding for the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grant program will likely disappear based on a May 16 announcement by Michigan Rep. John Dingell, chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees funding. "Abstinence-only seems to be a colossal failure," Dingell said. Democratic lawmakers say they intend to let money for this program expire on June 30.

"With all we know about how to prevent teen pregnancy and reduce sexually transmitted diseases, it is high time to redirect the millions of federal dollars that we squander every year on abstinence-only education to programs that actually work," said Rep. Diana DeGette of Colorado.

Large federal study finds abstinence-only ineffective

After more than two years of delays, results from a federally funded evaluation of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs were released in April. The study, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, concludes that abstinence-only education does not work to change young people's behavior.

The study found that youth in abstinence-only programs were no more likely than youth not in these programs to have abstained from sex in the four to six years after they began participating in the study. Youth in both groups who reported having had sex also reported similar numbers of sexual partners and had initiated sex at the same average age.

A commentary on these results is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ysufzw>. The full evaluation report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/27wuto>.

APHA rebukes abstinence-only education policies

The American Public Health Association recently published a policy statement on U.S. abstinence-only education policies (<http://tinyurl.com/2pauoy>). The policy statement analyzes both practical and ethical concerns with these policies, and provides a series of recommendations in support of comprehensive sex education. For links to additional policy statements on this issue go to <http://teenbirths.phi.org/positionpapers.html>.