



Yates Family Planning Services
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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT HEALTHY TEENS ACT

- A. 2856 (Gottfried)**
- S. 1342 (Winner)**

An Act to amend the public health law and the state finance law, in relation to establishing the age-appropriate sex education grant program, to be referred to as the Healthy Teens Act.

Young people are constantly exposed to sexually explicit culture through all types of media – TV, movies, the Internet, magazines – yet we know that when given accurate information and skills-building capabilities, young people can make informed decisions about their health and sexual activity. Young people have a right to information that can protect their health and save their lives.

Unfortunately, not all schools and teachers provide this critical information. New York State has no dedicated funding stream for comprehensive sex education in schools. Rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in NYS are among the highest in the country. There were nearly 40,000 teenage pregnancies in 2004 among 15-19 year olds in New York State (NYS DOH) and the highest rate of gonorrhea are among 15-19 year olds (NYSDOH). Nationally, one half of all new HIV infections are among young people under the age of 25 (CDC).

Sex and HIV education programs that discuss not only abstinence but also relationship skills, self-esteem building and information about condoms and other methods of contraception have been proven to:

- delay the onset of intercourse,
- reduce the frequency of intercourse,
- decrease the number of sexual partners of program participants,
- increase condom use or contraceptive use

The Healthy Teens Act, implemented by the Department of Health, would establish a competitive grant program for local school districts, school based health centers, BOCES, and community based organizations for the implementation of comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education. It would ensure that programs allow for honest interaction between teachers and students and would create a funding source for schools and communities to provide age-appropriate programs so that young people can learn how to protect themselves and make healthy decisions.

As a family planning provider in the Finger Lakes region of NYS, we strongly support this legislation and urge passage of the Healthy Teens Act. We can attest to the benefits of providing age-appropriate and medically accurate information on sexuality to our clients, but this message must be taught in schools as well so that our youth receive consistent and accurate messages.

Polls show that 77% of New Yorkers support age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education and that parents want help talking to their children about sex and want schools to be involved. We know the benefits of working together to achieve this and the Healthy Teens Act would provide the means to accomplish this.

Yates Family Planning Services urges the passage of the Healthy Teens Act.

Sincerely,

Marty Blumenstock
Executive Director