

## ***Quick Sheet:*** **Dispelling the Myths about Abstinence-Only Education Programs**



NATIONAL  
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***MYTH:*** *Abstinence-only education prevents teens from engaging in risky sexual behavior.*

**TRUTH:** A recent report conducted for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found **no evidence that abstinence-only programs increased the rate of sexual abstinence.** Other research has shown that abstinence-only programs may actually reduce the use of contraception among teens, increasing their risk of unplanned pregnancy and/or contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

***MYTH:*** *Abstinence-only education allows educators to teach teens about how to protect themselves against unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.*

**TRUTH:** Programs that receive the federal abstinence-only funding are prohibited from discussing methods of contraception, including condoms, except in the context of failure rates.

***MYTH:*** *New York does not accept federal abstinence-only funding.*

**TRUTH:** In 1996, the federal government appropriated millions of dollars for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. States accepting the funds are required to match every four federal dollars with three state-raised dollars. Eight states have refused to take the money because of the restrictions placed on sexual education programs. In 2005, New York received \$3,676,827 in federal abstinence-only funding.

***MYTH:*** *New York teens get more information than teens in other parts of the country. They know about all types of birth control and they use it more.*

**TRUTH:** New York City teenagers do not use birth control pills as often as the “national average” teen. In 2005, among those high school students who reported being sexually active, only **6% of females and 9% of males in New York City reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse** compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.

However, New York City adolescents *are* using condoms in rates higher than the national average. In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 63% of females and 77% of males in New York City reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 56% of females and 70% of males nationwide.

## Dispelling the Myths about Abstinence-Only Education

**MYTH:** *Sex ed is something each school district decides about. There is nothing we can do to address this problem statewide.*

**TRUTH:** You can support comprehensive sexual education in New York by encouraging passage of the *Healthy Teens Act*. *The Healthy Teens Act* would establish an age-appropriate, medically accurate, sexual education grant program with the information, assistance, skills, and support to enable them to make responsible decisions, including abstaining from sexual intercourse and for those who do become sexually active, the use of condoms or contraceptives effectively.”

You can also support after-school peer education programs like TORCH, our nationally recognized program that combines peer sexual health education and leadership training of New York City youth.

For more information visit NARAL Pro-Choice New York at [www.prochoiceny.org](http://www.prochoiceny.org)



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