

Washington

Raising the Bar for High-Quality Prevention Education

Problem Overview

Risky sexual behaviors put youth at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and unintended pregnancies. According to Washington's Department of Health (DOH),

- In 2007, statewide rates of Chlamydia, the most commonly reported STI, were second highest among youth aged 15–17 years.
- Unintended pregnancies among females aged 15–17 resulted in more than 2,000 births during 2006.

Program/Activity Description

Washington state legislators learned that educational messages delivered through schools regarding HIV/STIs and teen pregnancy prevention were incomplete and inconsistent. In response, a bipartisan group of 41 legislators requested that the DOH and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) jointly develop guidelines for sexual health and disease prevention as a framework for providing medically and scientifically accurate sexuality education. Additionally, the legislature passed the Healthy Youth Act in 2007, requiring schools that provide sexuality education ensure that the content

- Is medically and scientifically accurate and provides information on abstinence and contraception or protection methods.
- Reflects the DOH/OSPI guidelines.
- Is appropriate for all youth, regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, cultural, or disability status.

As a result of the Healthy Youth Act, Washington's HIV Prevention Education program, supported in part through CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health,

- Collaborated with the DOH, CDC-funded national nongovernmental organizations, and other groups in Washington's Healthy Youth Alliance coalition to examine the potential impact of the Healthy Youth Act on schools, estimate the cost of implementing the mandate, and identify school-level steps needed to implement the guidelines and the legislation.
- Conducted four 2-day regional training sessions with the DOH and Center for Health Training for more than 240 key school personnel on ways to implement the Healthy Youth Act.

Program/Activity Outcomes

Providing youth with scientifically and medically accurate information, such as that required through Washington's Healthy Youth Act, constitutes a major step toward ensuring that young people will have the knowledge and skills needed to build healthy relationships and avoid or prevent STIs, including HIV, and unintended pregnancy.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Adolescent and School Health
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth

