

Statement of the Coalition for Responsible Sex Ed on the Public Health and Ethical Concerns with Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs and the Need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Submitted for the Record
April 23, 2008**

The Coalition for Responsible Sex Ed is a coalition of 51 educational, religious, health, social service and advocacy organizations, as well as concerned individuals that promotes lifelong healthy sexuality by advocating for policies on comprehensive sexuality education. Our Minnesota Coalition has a 9 year history of advocating on both a state and federal level for policies and investments in the health and wellbeing of Minnesota's youth.

Our Minnesota Coalition is writing today to request that you end abstinence-only-until-marriage funding and we ask that you support investments in comprehensive sexuality education.

Please provide the necessary oversight to bring an end to funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. States and community organizations need the federal government to make a real investment in youth. We need investment in comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate programs that include abstinence, contraception and disease prevention based on the best scientific evidence available. Implementing effective programs helps states meet the needs of their youth as they grow and develop decision making skills.

The state of Minnesota has experienced the first increase in teen pregnancy and birth rates in 16 years. While this 6% increase in teen pregnancy and 7% increase in teen birth rates (2006 data) may only represent a single year increase and not a trend, this should serve as a wake up call to all advocates concerned for the health of young people. Teen pregnancy prevention is a complex and requires coordinated and comprehensive prevention efforts. Comprehensive sex education is one necessary component of this prevention.

The absence of funding for effective programs has put many states, Minnesota included, in the difficult position of turning away needed federal dollars. Because current federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs does not allow states the ability to implement effective programs, we support Minnesota's decision not to request Title V funds in 2007. Please change this funding strategy to invest in programs that have been shown to have a positive impact on the behavior of youth.

Coalition contact information:

www.coalitionforsexed.org

Lorie Alvashere, Policy Director of Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (Coalition Member Organization)

Cell: 612.991.9070

e-mail: lorie@moappp.org