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Mathematica Findings Too Narrow

Results based on only 4 programs not reflective of the effectiveness of abstinence education as a whole

Washington, DC—The following is a statement by NAEA Executive Director Valerie Huber in reaction to the Mathematica evaluation study on abstinence education.

“It is important that the positive impact of abstinence education be recognized. Today’s release by Mathematica Policy Research Inc. should not be generalized to all current abstinence education programs. This study examined only four out of a pool of over 700 Title V Programs. These narrow findings represent less than 1% of all Title V projects across the nation.

“Today’s findings verify what most citizens and parents already know and that is abstinence education must begin early and be continuously reinforced throughout the adolescent years. Thoughtful policy makers should support increased efforts to strengthen this important message.

“There is overwhelming support from parents and teens for abstinence education—especially when people understand that the emphasis of abstinence education centers on building healthy relationships, enhancing self esteem and discussing the impact that sexual activity can have on a teen’s future goals.

“This study began when Title V abstinence education programs were still in their infancy. The field of abstinence has significantly grown and evolved since that time and the results demonstrated in the Mathematica study are not representative of the abstinence education community as a whole.

“The recent March conference on the Evaluation of Abstinence Education, sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services featured at least 30 significant evaluation studies that demonstrated positive trends in teen abstinent behavior. Now that federal funding has been made available, quality evaluation of abstinence education programs will continue and help to identify proven practices in abstinence education. Currently, there are several significant studies that demonstrate that abstinence education programs are effective in delaying sexual debut, reducing partners once sexually active, and empowering sexually experienced students to embrace abstinent behavior.

“NAEA strongly maintains that the validity of the abstinence message does not change as a result of these findings. Instead, it reinforces the commitment of the abstinence profession to make continuous improvement in the delivery of the optimal sexual health message to youth.”

*This statement and additional information is available at www.AbstinenceAssociation.org
<<http://www.AbstinenceAssociation.org>>*

NAEA also encourages that interested parties view a medical perspective on this study at www.medinstitute.org <<http://www.medinstitute.org>>

**To schedule an interview with NAEA Executive Director Valerie Huber,
please contact Tim Scheiderer at 703.683.5004 x. 126.**

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Abstinence Works!

Studies Validating the Efficacy of Abstinence Education

April 12, 2007

1. YRBSS, Trends in the Prevalence of Sexual Behavior, CDC 2005[i] <#_edn1>

Results: 13% decline reported in the proportion of U.S. teens who have initiated sexual activity from 1991 (54%) to 2005 (47%).

Conclusion: Fewer teens are having sex which means more teens are choosing abstinence.

2. Santelli, Journal of Adolescent Health, 2004[ii] <#_edn2>

Study: The national Youth Risk Behavior Survey provided estimates for sexual activity and contraceptive use among teens aged 15-17 years between 1991 and 2001 (n=31,058). This data was combined with other data from the National Survey of Family Growth. Calculations were made to determine relative contributions to the annual change in risk of pregnancy.

Results: 53% of the decline in pregnancy rates can be attributed to decreased sexual experience.

Conclusion: Abstinence has substantially contributed to the decrease in teen pregnancy.

3. Reasons of the Heart, American Journal of Health Behavior (in press)[iii] <#_edn3>

Study: The study was designed to evaluate the impact of an abstinence education program on the delay of sexual initiation and on possible cognitive mediators of sexual initiation for virgin 7th graders in suburban Virginia. A quasi-experimental design involving 820 7th grade students was used with 3 middle schools receiving the program and 2 middle schools with similar demographics serving as the comparison group.

Results: Adolescent virgins who received the program were approximately one-half as likely as non-participants to initiate sexual activity after one year (P<.05).

Conclusion: Abstinence education reduces sexual initiation over a twelve month period.

4. Not Me, Not Now, Journal of Health Communications, 2001[iv] <#_edn4>

Study: Not Me, Not Now is an abstinence oriented, adolescent pregnancy prevention integrated communications program developed by Monroe County, N.Y. The evaluation utilized a cross-sectional time series approach in the analysis of items from several waves of youth surveys administered to two different age groups of teens. Analysis of pregnancy rates for 15-17 year-olds in the county were compared to reductions found in similar geographic areas.

Results: After a 5-year county-wide mass communications program through Not Me, Not Now there was a 32% reduction in the percent of teens under 16 who had experienced sex (P<.05). The adolescent pregnancy rate for Monroe County dropped from 63.4% in 1993 to 49.5% in 1996. By comparison, Monroe's rate was higher than two surrounding counties in 1993 and lower than both counties in 1996.

Conclusion: Abstinence education demonstrates statistically significant, consistent changes on measures of program awareness, beliefs and attitudes, self-reported behaviors, and pregnancy rates.

5. For Keeps, American Journal of Health Behavior, 2005[v] <#_edn5>

Study: The study population comprised 2069 adolescents in seventh and eighth grades enrolled in 5 urban and 2 suburban middle schools in the Midwest during the 2001-2002 school year. Classrooms were randomly assigned either to program or control group. Program students received For Keeps, a five session abstinence program.

Results: No impact on sexual initiation was demonstrated, however, intervention students who were sexually active were about one-half as likely to be sexually active after 5 months than those who did not receive the program (P<.05) and sexually experienced students who received the program demonstrated a reduction in partners.

Conclusion: Abstinence education reduces the prevalence of casual sex among sexually experienced students.

6. Sex Respect/Teen Aid, Journal of Research and Development in Education, 1992[vi] <#_edn6>

Study: Approximately 7,000 high school and middle students participated in the evaluation. To determine the effects of the programs Sex Respect and Teen Aid, students in schools with the abstinence programs were compared with students in similar control schools within the same school district.

Results: The two programs together were shown to reduce the rate of initiation of sexual activity among at-risk students by 25% when compared with a control group of similar students who were not exposed to the program.

Conclusion: Abstinence education is effective with at-risk students.

7. Postponing Sexual Involvement (Abstinence Version). *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1990[vii] <#_edn7>

Study: PSI was an abstinence program developed by Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, and provided to low-income 8th grade students. Of the 387 baseline virgins, 278 received the PSI intervention and 109 did not.

Results: A comparison of program participants with a control population of comparable low-income minority students who did not participate in the program showed that by the end of eighth grade, students in the control group were five times more likely to have begun having sex than were PSI students (20 percent versus 4 percent). By the end of ninth grade, the difference between groups was still significant, with rates of 39 percent versus 24 percent.

Conclusion: Abstinence education is effective with inner-city students.

8. Heritage Keepers. *Office of Population Affairs, HHS, 2005*[viii] <#_edn8>

Study: An abstinence education program for middle school students in South Carolina was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design with matched comparison groups to determine its impact on the rate of sexual initiation after 12 months for the sexually inactive in the sample.

Results: After one year program participants were about one-half as likely to become sexually initiated as their peers in the comparison group ($P < .001$)

Conclusion: Abstinence education reduces the rate of sexual initiation over a 12 month period.

9. Best Friends. *Adolescent and Family Health, 2005*[ix] <#_edn9>

Study: The study sought to show the effect of the Best Friends program in Washington, DC on the early onset of sex. The data analyzed in the study consists of responses to questionnaires filled out by program attendees at the beginning and end of the year, which are compared to the responses of a sample of girls to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey of Washington, DC.

Results: Program participants were seven times more likely than the comparison group to avoid sexual activity.

Conclusion: Abstinence education is effective with inner-city students.

[i] YRBSS, Trends in the Prevalence of Sexual Behavior. CDC 2005.

[ii] Santelli, et al. Can Changes in Sexual Behaviors Among High School Students Explain the Decline in Teen Pregnancy Rates in the 1990's? *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 2004.

[iii] Weed, Eriksen, Birch, et al. An Abstinence Program's Impact on Cognitive Mediator's and Sexual Initiation. *American Journal Health Behavior* (in press).

[iv] Doniger, Adams, Utter, Riley, "Impact Evaluation of the 'Not Me, Not Now' Abstinence-Oriented, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Communications Program, "Monroe County, NY, *Journal of Health Communications*, Jan-Mar. 2001.

[v] Borawski, Trapl, Lovegreen, et al, Effectiveness of abstinence-only intervention in middle school teens. *American Journal Health Behavior*. 2005

[vi] Olsen JA, Weed SE, et al. The effect of abstinence education programs on virgin versus non-virgin students. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. 1992

[vii] Marion Howard and Judith Blarney McCabe, "Helping Teenagers Postpone Sexual Involvement," *Family Planning Perspectives*, January/February 1990, pp. 21-26

[viii] Weed, Eriksen, Birch. An evaluation of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Program. In Golden A (Ed.) *Evaluating Abstinence Education Programs: Improving Implementation and Assessing Impact*. Washington DC: Office of Population Affairs and the Administration for Children and Families, Dept of Health and Human Services. 2005

[ix] Lerner, Robert, "Can Abstinence Work?" An Analysis of the Best Friends Program," *Adolescent and Family Health*, 2005 April Vol 3, No. 4