



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program is changing attitudes among teens

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health is spearheading an effort to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases through its Abstinence-Only Education Program.

With support from Section 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act, the department has provided funding for abstinence-only education to community-based projects targeting teens in 41 of Alabama's 67 counties: Barbour, Blount, Bullock, Calhoun, Chambers, Choctaw, Coffee, Colbert, Conecuh, Coosa, Crenshaw, Dale, Dallas, Elmore, Franklin, Geneva, Greene, Hale, Henry, Houston, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mobile, Montgomery, Morgan, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Shelby, St. Clair, Sumter, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa and Winston. From 1998 to 2003, over 180,000 young people have participated.

Gerald Halpin and Glennelle Halpin, professors at Auburn University, are conducting a comprehensive, intensive, longitudinal evaluation of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program. The evaluators are tracking the rate of pregnancies, abortions and births to teens and the incidences of sexually transmitted diseases. Further, they are assessing knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding abstinence-only-until-marriage.

Results from their evaluation show that projects throughout Alabama are making a difference. Following participation in the abstinence-only educational interventions, teens have a significantly greater understanding of the social, psychological and health gains of abstinence until marriage as well as of the harmful effects of not abstaining.

They understand that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and they know that sexual advances can be rejected. More believe that abstinence by all school-age children and a monogamous relationship in the context of marriage are the expected standards. Thinking that they can abstain, large percentages say that they intend to do so next year and even until marriage.

The impact of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program is seen in health statistics for counties involved. From initiation of the abstinence-only education interventions in 1998, pregnancy and abortion rates for 15- 17-year-old females have dropped considerably. Birth rates for 15- 17-year-old unmarried females and for 10- 14 -year-old unmarried females have also dropped. These drops in the project counties are substantially greater than the decreases seen in non-project counties throughout the state of Alabama.

Rebecca Warren, RN, MSN, coordinator of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program, said, "The positive impact demonstrated by our community-based projects establishes the importance of abstinence-only-until-marriage education in changing adolescents' attitudes and behaviors and is key to protecting the health and future of Alabama's youth."

For more information, to request free abstinence-only educational materials, or to find out how you can become involved in promoting abstinence-only-until-marriage among adolescents, please contact Susan R. Stewart, RN, MSN, director at 334-206-2901, or visit the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program's website at www.adph.org/abstinence.

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