

## Support More Than “Just Say No”

### Recent study shows: Virginity pledges have no significant impact on rates of sexually transmitted diseases

A study<sup>1</sup> presented at the National STD Prevention Conference in March 2004 reports: **Teenagers who make ‘virginity pledges’ to abstain from sexual intercourse until marriage have similar rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as teens who did not take a pledge to remain abstinent.**

#### Study Findings

“Pledgers”—those who made a virginity pledge

“Non-pledgers”—those who did not make a virginity pledge

- Pledgers abstained from sexual intercourse an average of 18 months longer than non-pledgers; however they were less likely to use contraception at the time of intercourse than non-pledgers.
- Within the past year, only 40% of male pledgers and 47% of female pledgers used condoms; 60% percent of male non-pledgers and 55% of female non-pledgers used condoms.
- Pledgers were less likely than non-pledgers to get tested for an STD.
- Pledgers were less likely than non-pledgers to see a doctor or nurse because they were concerned about an STD
- Pledgers were less likely than non-pledgers to report having been diagnosed with an STD in the past year.
- Pledgers and non-pledgers are equally at risk to contract a STD.
- 88% of pledgers engaged in sexual intercourse before marriage; 99% of non-pledgers had sex before marriage.
- Pledgers were more likely to marry at a younger age.

#### Virginity Pledges Are Not Effective in Reducing STDs

Pledgers initiate sexual intercourse later, have fewer partners, and have less cumulative exposure to risk of STDs.

#### ***So why are pledger STD rates as high as non-pledger rates?***

Programs that offer abstinence as the only option, do not include any information on contraception or prevention of STDs, rely on scare tactics and overstate contraception failure rates, and do not provide young people with information they will need for healthy lives.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Bearman and Hannah Bruckner. The Relationship Between Virginity Pledges in Adolescence and STD Acquisition in Young Adulthood. Presented at National STD Conference, Philadelphia, PA, March 2004.

#### What DOES Work to Reduce STDs and Unintended Pregnancy . . .

Sexuality education that is age-appropriate, comprehensive, evidence-based and medically accurate

Comprehensive sexuality education throughout the educational experience

Sexuality education for adolescents that provides information on abstinence and contraception to prevent STDs, HIV/AIDS, and unintended pregnancy

Public policies that direct school districts to provide comprehensive, medically accurate and developmentally appropriate sexuality education



Sexuality Education for Life-Minnesota is a coalition of 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 and access to confidential health care services.

Sexuality Education for Life-Minnesota is coordinated by the Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP) [www.mnaidsproject.org](http://www.mnaidsproject.org) and the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (MOAPPP) [www.moapppp.org](http://www.moapppp.org). For more information on Sexuality Education for Life-Minnesota: [www.SexEdforLife.org](http://www.SexEdforLife.org)