

Hoosiers Support Condom Education
Eight of 10 say "yes" Teens Need Honest Information
By Kathleen Baldwin

When asked if Indiana public high schools should educate teenagers about how to use condoms to prevent the spread of HIV, almost eight out of 10 (77 percent) Hoosiers say "yes." This overwhelming support is not new either. In 1993, 79 percent of Hoosiers strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, and 75 percent agreed/strongly agreed with it in 1998. And Hoosiers believe this information should be available to all students, regardless of whether or not they are sexually active.

A critical mass, 94 percent of Hoosiers across the state, believe that when condom effectiveness is discussed in Indiana public high schools, only medically accurate information should be provided. Yet the predominant message in too many Hoosier classrooms is that abstinence is the only effective means of protecting oneself. Correct use of latex condoms is an effective way to greatly reduce the risk of pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Yet proponents of an abstinence-only-until-marriage approach to sexuality education, including the now politically-influenced Center for Disease Control and Prevention, would have you believe that isn't true. Sexuality education opponents contend that condoms don't work. But 82 percent of Hoosiers aren't buying it. According to the IU study, they believe it's a lie to tell high school students that condoms don't work.

This information, from a recent Indiana University study led by William L. Yarber illustrates how Hoosiers are much like other Americans when it comes to sharing honest information with youth. Among parents of 7th - 12th grade students nationally, 85 percent say that school sexuality education should cover how to use condoms correctly.

The IU study also shows that 71 percent of Hoosiers believe that the views of the majority of local parents should determine what information about condoms should be given to teenagers in Indiana public high schools. Planned Parenthood agrees.

Contact your local school and tell them you support complete and medically accurate sexuality education. Contact Planned Parenthood at www.ppin.org to join our action alert network to monitor this and other critical policy issues.

Kathleen Baldwin is vice-president education and training for Planned Parenthood of
Greater Indiana, Inc.