

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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November 5, 2010

Dear Child Advocate:

I am pleased to present Florida's Sexual Health Education Community Outreach Tool Kit. This Tool Kit was created to provide valuable information, innovative ideas, and strategies for community members to build awareness and support for policies and programs that improve sexual health outcomes among youth.

Florida leads the nation in the number of AIDS cases reported to have been transmitted through heterosexual contact, rates second in the nation in terms of overall HIV incidences, and AIDS related illnesses are the leading cause of death for Black women ages 25-44. These facts demonstrate the need for heightened awareness and community action to improve the health literacy and well-being of our citizens. It is critical that our youth learn the skills necessary to become healthy adults. Community coalitions which bring youth, parents, educators, and community organizations together to address sexual health topics, are a key strategy to achieving this goal.

Results from the 2009 Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey show that 37% of 9th graders (approximately 73,800 students) have had sexual intercourse at least once with an increasing 63% of 12th graders (approximately 96,200) reporting having had sexual intercourse at least once. These data show a significant number of students in Florida putting their health at risk by possibly becoming pregnant or by contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Academic achievement is strongly linked to student health. Parenthood is the leading cause of school dropout for teen girls, and concerns and stress caused by involvement in sexual risk behaviors can be a barrier to learning. This Tool Kit offers communities the facts, figures, and best practices needed to ensure that students receive information that will assist them in reducing sexual risk behaviors, staying in school, and getting the education required to be productive residents of the state of Florida.

I encourage parents, youth, educators, and community leaders throughout the state to use Florida's Sexual Health Education Community Outreach Tool Kit to examine current trends, and work together to improve the health and academic success of their youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "T. Willard Fair".

T. Willard Fair, Chairman
Florida State Board of Education

TWF/kz