

# New Study: Texas Failing Families, Teens on Sexuality Education

---

## *Mistruths, Fear, Ignorance Characterize Sex Ed amid High Teen Birth, STD Rates*

AUSTIN - Texas gets more federal abstinence funding than any other state and has one of the highest teen birthrates in the nation, but an extensive new study shows that what students are learning in sexuality education classes is plagued by factual errors and other mistruths, distortions and stereotypes.

Just Say Don't Know: Sexuality Education in Texas Public Schools, the largest study ever of what is taught in sex education classes, reveals that 96 percent of Texas school districts teach students nothing about responsible pregnancy and disease prevention except abstinence.

Texas is failing families when it comes to sexuality education," said David Wiley, a health education professor at Texas State University-San Marcos and one of the co-authors of the report from the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund. "Our classrooms are perpetuating a conspiracy of silence that robs young people of the reliable information they need to make responsible life decisions."

Wiley and co-author Kelly Wilson, also a Texas State health education professor, analyzed thousands of pages of curriculum materials, district policies and other documents from nearly all of the state's more than 1,000 public school districts. Researchers obtained those documents through requests under the Texas Public Information Act sent to all of the state's school districts.

The report reveals that the abstinence-only programs that dominate Texas classrooms are littered with errors, mistruths, distortions and other serious problems that endanger the health and future of young people, TFN Education Fund President Kathy Miller said.

"Like most parents, I provide the moral and ethical guidance my children need on this sensitive subject," Miller said. "I also want sexuality education programs to encourage abstinence. But we must stop burying our

heads in the sand about high teen birth and STD rates and make sure young people get the medically accurate information they need to protect their health and their futures."

The findings include:

- ❖ Community input is often a myth, with 81 percent of districts reporting no formal recommendations on sexuality education from state-mandated local advisory councils.
- ❖ 41 percent of school districts use materials with factual errors. Classes include grossly misleading information and discourage sexually active young people from protecting themselves, insisting that condoms are ineffective in preventing pregnancy and STDs.
- ❖ Shaming and fear-based instruction are standard strategies for teaching students about sexuality. Instruction often equates sex with disease, anti-social behavior and even death rather than focusing on the development of healthy attitudes students will need as adults.
- ❖ Instruction often promotes stereotypes and biases, including rigid and outdated gender roles as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- ❖ Some districts betray the trust of families by forcing religious content with which parents might disagree on students during instruction on human sexuality.

"Young Texans overall rate well above national averages on virtually every published statistic involving sexual risk-taking behaviors," Dr. Wilson said. "Our research shows that many public officials apparently have decided that ignorance will protect these kids." Note for editors: The report and graphics are available online here.