

Title: Support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Adolescent Access to Condoms and Contraception in South Carolina

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A statewide random-digit dialed telephone survey was administered to residents of a historically conservative southern state to 1) assess the level of support for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in public schools, 2) assess the support for availability to condoms and contraception as an effective strategy for reducing unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted (STIs) among adolescents and 3) assess the perceived view of reproductive health as a moral or public health issue.

Survey data were obtained from 841 South Carolina residents May through June 2013. Findings from the study revealed that the majority (90%) of South Carolina residents support CSE in public schools, and 71% support access to birth control and condoms as an effective strategy for decreasing pregnancies and STIs among adolescents. Data were analyzed to determine characteristics of the population in support of CSE and adolescent availabilty to condoms and contraception as a prevention strategy to reduce pregnancies and STIs. Results demonstrated that the largest percentage (33%) of respondents viewed the issue of reproductive health as a moral issue instead of a public health.

These research findings underscore the importance of health promotion strategies to inform the general public on the effectiveness of CSE and increasing access to reliable forms of contraception for sexually active adolescents. Using data-driven health promotion strategies to educate the general public about the effectiveness of these strategies can influence the level of support for these strategies and ultimately impact policies that will help to decrease the rates of unplanned pregnancy among adolescents.

Biography: Dr. Kershner is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Healthcare Administration Program at Francis Marion University. She previously worked at the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy where she managed a federal research study supporting the implementation of reproductive health curricula to reduce teen birth rates. Dr. Kershner has worked with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health and assisted with the writing of a $1.5 million grant award per year over five years. Dr. Kershner's interest areas include public health policy, reproductive health, contraceptive technologies, sexually transmitted infections and adolescent risky behaviors.

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