

2005 Resolution

Minors Seeking Reproductive Health Care

WHEREAS in 2002 there were ten million sexually active teens in the United States considered to be at risk of sexually transmitted infections or of causing a pregnancy or becoming unintentionally pregnant; and

WHEREAS the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the American Public Health Association, and the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association support access to confidential reproductive health services for minors; and

WHEREAS courts have interpreted the Medicaid statutes to require that minors requesting care be provided with confidential care; and

WHEREAS a majority of parents support the right of minors to receive confidential care and, in the case of their own adolescents a majority of parents are knowledgeable that their minor children are seeking reproductive health care; and

WHEREAS research has consistently shown that faced with parental notification requirements, few minors would abstain from sex; and

WHEREAS the availability of confidential clinical services does not increase the likelihood of adolescent sexual behavior or sexual risk-taking behaviors, nor does it encourage earlier initiation of sexually risky behaviors; and

WHEREAS faced with parental notification requirements, significant numbers of minors would use less effective birth control methods, use no birth control methods, refrain from seeking health care for sexually transmitted infections, and take greater risks related to sexual behaviors; and

WHEREAS parental notification requirements benefit a small proportion of adolescents and their families while having substantial negative consequences for a greater proportion of adolescents and their families,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that WPHA supports:

- Comprehensive educational public health programs (abstinence-based) based on medically accurate information that supports activities to improve parent child communications on sexual health and sexual risks; and
- Availability of reproductive health care to minors without a requirement for parental consent; and
- Urgently needed research and programs to assist clinics and agencies that provide services to adolescents and their families with determining the most effective methods by utilizing professional health care providers to facilitate health education and communications.

NOW BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that WPHA opposes:

- Legislative or regulatory parental notification requirements that are not supported by public health research and the effect of which may be to put greater numbers of adolescents at greater risk of pregnancy and untreated sexually transmitted diseases; and
- Continuing expenditures of public funds on educational programs that have been not been shown to be effective in improving public health (“abstinence-only” programs) reducing sexual risk- taking behaviors, increasing public knowledge or improving access to needed health care services.

Fiscal Impact: No cost to WPHA.

Probable impact on public health: Unobstructed access to reproductive health care of minors and decreased sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies among minors.

References

Projected Economic Costs Due to Health Consequences of Teenagers’ Loss of Confidentiality in Obtaining Reproductive Health Care Services in Texas. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med/Vol 158, Dec 2004

Confidential Reproductive Health Services for Minors: The Potential Impact of Mandated Parental Involvement for Contraception. Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2004, 36(5):182-191

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