

# Healthy Futures for Youth

healthy choices for healthy futures

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Does it work?** Teens are showing a willingness and desire to delay sexual activity. National trends show that 54% (up from 46% in 1991) of all high school teens have not had sexual intercourse and teen pregnancy is down 35% since the mid-nineties. <sup>1</sup>

**Is it a "Just say no" message?** The abstinence message is very positive. Our educators encourage students to focus on their dreams, goals, hopes, and aspirations. When teens are focusing on their future, they are motivated to avoid risk behaviors that can lead them off course. The emphasis is on understanding the consequences of choices and how they can live healthy and fulfilling lives while choosing to avoid sexual activity.

**Are teens left feeling ashamed and afraid?** Absolutely not. With the positive emphasis of abstinence education, teens leave programs feeling motivated, inspired, and equipped to pursue their dreams. This is not a fear-based message. The abstinence message focuses on teens having the ability to make their own decisions and being fully educated about what their options are.

**Does Free to Be teach about contraception?** Many abstinence programs do educate teens about risk reduction methods as well as risk avoidance. Free to Be focuses on risk avoidance and encourages teens to know all the facts and determine the best choice for their own long-term health.

**Is this a religious message?** Though the message of postponing sex until marriage coincides with the views of many religions, Free to Be approaches abstinence among teens from a health perspective. Free to Be has no religious affiliation.

**What about teens who have had or are having sex?** Many teens believe that once they have had sex, they cannot stop and must continue. Free to Be emphasizes that teens have the ability to make a new decision if they choose to, and abstain from this point forward. We encourage teens to see a medical professional if they have been sexually active in order to be evaluated and treated if necessary. For many teens abstinence education offers them the option and the tools they need to change their behavior.

**Is Free to Be legal in the state of California?** Yes, Free to Be's programming helps school districts meet the requirements contained in California Education Code 51933, including teaching that "abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only certain way to prevent unintended pregnancy...(and) sexually transmitted diseases." <sup>2</sup> In addition, Free to Be's curriculum aligns with the Health Education Content Standards that have been adopted by the state Department of Education as a guideline for school districts. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trends in the Prevalence of Sexual Behaviors, National Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 1991-2009. CDC Synopsis - National Birthrate for Teens, Aged 15-19. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

<sup>2</sup> <http://law.justia.com/california/codes/edc/51933.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp>

