

SWYS 2005 NEWS—PARENTS KEY IN PROMOTING ABSTINENCE FOR TEENS

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of teens in Southwest Wisconsin report not having had sexual intercourse. Of those who report being sexually active, 43% report having had only one partner. Overall, 68% of teens believe people their age should not engage in sexual intercourse.

These are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) survey conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3. More than 3,600 students in grades 7 through 12 in the school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge and Seneca participated the survey in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

Among the key findings is that teens are more likely to abstain from sexual intercourse if their parents have communicated to them that they think it is wrong for teens to have sex. Only 16% of students who agreed that their parents thought it was wrong for teens their age to have sex reported having had sexual intercourse, while 55% of the students who felt teen sex was okay had engaged in sexual intercourse. (see chart)

"Parental involvement in the lives of teens has a significant impact on teen sexual behavior," Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Educator, reports. "Teens reporting clear parental rules with consistently enforced consequences are over two times more likely to report never having had sex than those who report unclear family rules, and inconsistent enforcement of those rules. Teens who eat dinner three or more times per week with their family are less likely to have had sex than those who eat dinner with their family less than three times per week."

"The Centers for Disease Control reports that about 47% of all high school students nationwide report having had sex by the age of 18," according to Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "Among the teens we surveyed, there is an obvious trend of increasing numbers of teens becoming sexually active as they get older. Less than 3% of seventh graders report having had sexual intercourse; by 12th grade, that percentage climbs to 50%."

"Of those teens who report being sexually active, 55% report always using some form of birth control," says Tom Schmitz, Grant County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "The younger the sexually active individual, the less likely he or she is to report always using birth control."

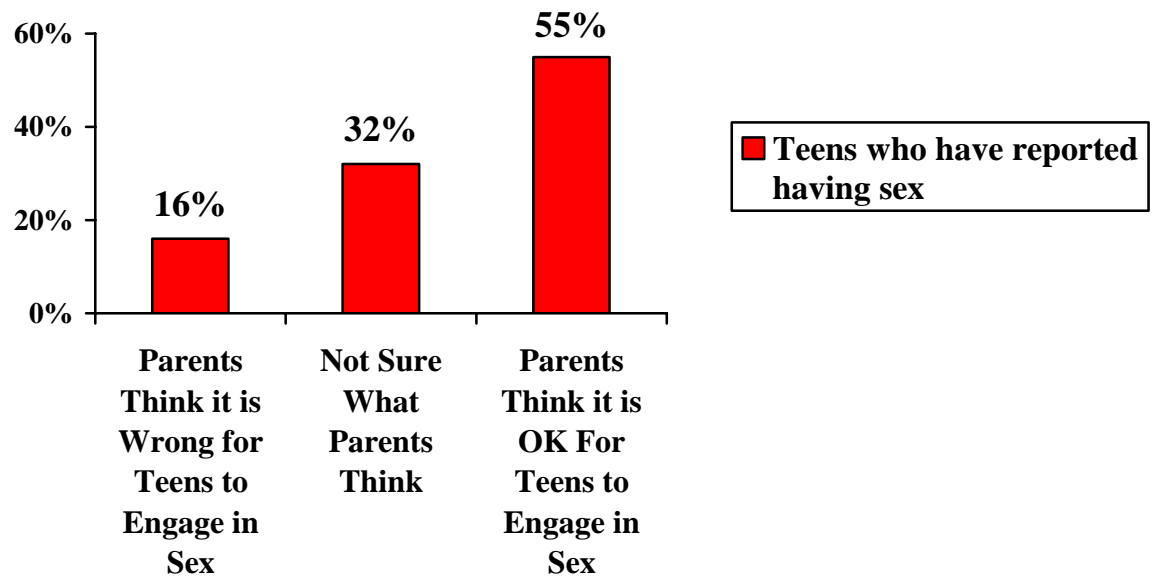
"Teenagers are more likely to report that they generally use birth control when they also report that their family loves them," says Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. "When asked about sexual behaviors teens think are okay for people their age, 62% of

the respondents selected behaviors which are considered to pose little or no risk, including holding hands, kissing, and fondling. This is an increase of 7% from 2001. Of those teens that reported being sexually active, 64% say they usually use condoms, alone or in addition to another form of birth control. While condoms do provide some measure of protection, abstinence is the only way to be sure to avoid sexually transmitted disease.”

“Homosexual attitudes is an area of concern for educators,” reports Pam Hobson, Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent. “Forty-seven percent of teens surveyed report they think homosexual and bisexual behavior is wrong. Twenty-two percent report they would treat homosexual and bisexual people differently than heterosexual people, and another 12% say homosexual and bisexual people should be punished.”

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this summer. Potterton, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell and Hobson are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223 or Hobson at 608-647-6148.

Teen sexual behavior vs. perceived parental attitudes toward teen sexual behavior



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