



Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc.
P.O. Box 24072, Jackson, MS 39225
601-988-1330 (o), 601-988-1340 (f)

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Effectiveness of Abstinence Education

Presented to the Joint Mississippi House Education and Health Committees

Good afternoon, my name is Larry McAdoo and I represent Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. -- or ROMI for short – and the STARS abstinence-centered education program. Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation before you today.

According to a recent study on an abstinence-centered sex education program the research showed that it helped adolescents postpone sex. Published in the February two-thousand ten edition of the journal, *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, this study adds to the growing body of research showing the effectiveness of abstinence-centered sex education programs. It found that abstinence-centered sex education is very effective at reducing teen sex and works better than both “comprehensive” sex education and “safe” sex programs.

This research has been widely covered by every major media outlet, including the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*. Even those who have been hesitant to acknowledge the value of abstinence education in the past have called this study a “*game changer*.”

This study shows that:

- **Single-focused abstinence-centered sex education is the most effective approach in reducing teen sex.**
- **Abstinence education has a long-term positive impact on teens’ sexual behavior.**
- **Abstinence education is effective among high-risk teens.**
- **Proves critics wrong: abstinence education does not reduce condom use among teens that do have sex.**
- **Abstinence education is preferred in many communities and must continue to be a choice we offer to youth.**
- **Abstinence centered sex education focuses on health, not morals.**

Further, – according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) abstinence education is the best way to prevent the spread of the sexually transmitted disease (STD) human papillomavirus (HPV). The agency also said the use of condoms is not as effective as abstinence¹.

We are delighted to know that data from the CDC and a number of other new studies document what we have believed all along – that abstinence-centered sex education

is effective. We have always taught that the healthiest choice for adolescents is abstinence and that it should be the central focus of any responsible sex education program. We know that parents agree. According to a 2007 Zogby survey, parents prefer abstinence-centered sex education over comprehensive sex education by a 2:1 margin. In addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted a study last year entitled, The National Survey of Adolescents and Their parents. According to the findings, about 70% of parents agreed that it is “against [their] values for [their] adolescents to have sexual intercourse before marriage” and that “having sexual intercourse is something only married people should do.”

Adolescents surveyed in the study gave similar responses.

Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. (ROMI) offered the Students Taking a Radical Stand (STARS) Abstinence-Centered Program in the Jackson Public Schools, the Rankin County Adolescent Opportunity Program (AOP), and in several parochial schools from 2006 – 2010. During the life of the STARS Abstinence Education Program, three thousand one hundred sixty eight students participated in the 10 week in-class sessions.

Our independent research firm, Spectrum Education Group from Logan, Utah, found that the number of participants who were willing to commit to abstinence until marriage **increased** by 20% by the last year of the program. Furthermore, according

to Spectrum, and I quote, “Analysis of all data collected during the Project reveals that STARS met and/or exceeded all of its measurable goals.”

In conclusion, based on the findings of this rigorous research demonstrating the effectiveness of abstinence-centered sex education, we strongly encourage members of our state legislature to avoid taxpayer funding of an education and curricula that provide the medically inaccurate message that casual sex is “safe” as long as a condom is used or that abstinence and condom usage are equally protective factors. The body of published abstinence-centered research provides solid evidence that it should be given priority status in state and local sex education funding, policies and decision-making.

I therefore appeal to our entire community, parents, educators, clergy, and policy makers to examine the research and conclude that for Mississippi’s youth, an abstinence centered sex education is the most effective sex education.

Thank you.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Fact sheet for public health personnel: Male latex condoms and sexually transmitted diseases.* (Retrieved April 23, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/condoms.pdf>).

Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. (ROMI), founded in 2004, is a nonprofit organization guided by a vision to positively impact central city communities (CCC) in Jackson, Mississippi by offering residents spiritual guidance and social services to better enable them to make healthy life choices.