

DONALD A. MANZULLO  
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS  
CHAIRMAN

COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCIAL SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CAPITAL MARKETS, INSURANCE  
AND GOVERNMENT  
SPONSORED ENTERPRISES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL  
MONETARY POLICY,  
TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1316

March 22, 2006

The Honorable David M. Walker  
U.S. Government Accounting Office  
Comptroller General  
441 G Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20545

Dear Mr. Walker:

There are at least 24 teen pregnancy prevention programs that are funded by the Department of Health and Human Service (HHS).<sup>1</sup> A 2002 report issued by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) found that approximately \$427 million was spent on teen pregnancy prevention programs.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there has been no analysis of the content of federally-funded teen pregnancy prevention programs for accuracy and age appropriate content.

The federal government currently supports contraceptive programs to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) through several different programs. These include: Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Title X Family Planning, Indian Health Service funding, the Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), the Community Coalition Partnership Program for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy, and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant.<sup>3</sup> It is reasonable to expect that programs that receive the bulk of federal funding would be analyzed for accuracy and age appropriate content.

The Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) spends \$38.1 million on teen contraception education and promotes five out of the six programs described below.<sup>4</sup> While these programs market themselves as "abstinence plus," a page-by-page analysis of these curricula found that a mere 4.7 percent of these programs contain any reference to abstinence, and the content

<sup>1</sup>.A complete list of identified programs can be found at <http://www.house.gov/burton/RSC/Abstinence2.PDF> based on GAO/HEHS-99-4 at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov)

<sup>2</sup> This amount does include additional funding for the teen portion of CDC funding or ACF funding for teens. See <http://www.house.gov/burton/RSC/Abstinence4.PDF>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Programs recommended by the CDC include: 1. Reducing the Risk, 2. Becoming a Responsible Teen, 3. Focus on Kids, 4. Be Proud! Be Responsible and 5. Get Real about AIDS. See: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/hivcompendium/hivcompendium.hun>

16TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS  
2228 RAYBURN BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
202/225-5676  
FAX: 202/225-5284

DISTRICT OFFICES:  
415 SOUTH MULFORD ROAD  
ROCKFORD, IL 61108  
815/394-1231  
FAX: 815/394-3930

5186 NORTHWEST HIGHWAY  
SUITE 130  
CRYSTAL LAKE, IL 60014  
815/356-9800  
FAX: 815/356-9803

[www.house.gov/manzullo](http://www.house.gov/manzullo)

of these programs was unacceptable to most parents.<sup>5</sup> In addition, many find the content contained in these programs shocking at best and medically inaccurate at worst (e.g. suggesting that grape jelly and maple syrup be used as a lubricant). We are requesting an investigation into the content and accuracy of federally-funded contraception education programs to assess whether the government is funding dangerous and unhealthy programs that promote sexual activity among our youth.

The following is a brief description of some of the content in the most widely-used and government-recommended comprehensive sex education programs:

- *Becoming a Responsible Teen* (ages 14-18) –

“Sometimes people don’t have a water-based lubricant handy. If you were trying to find something around the house, or at a convenience store, to use as a substitute what would be safe?...Some ‘grocery store’ lubricants are safe to use if they do not contain oil: grape jelly, maple syrup, and honey.” (p. 114-115)

“Give each group a penile model, some lubricant, spermicide and paper towels, then say...‘One step at a time, I want each of you to practice the condom application and removal steps, with or without a lubricant. Your teammates have a task, too...They are going to give you a round of applause and praise what you did right’.” (p. 119)

- *Be Proud! Be Responsible* (for adolescents) –

“Go to the store together. Buy lots of different brands and colors [of condoms]. Plan a special day when you can experiment. Just talking about how you’ll use all of those condoms can be a turn on.” (p. 80)

“Invite students to brainstorm ways to increase spontaneity and the likelihood that they’ll use condoms...Examples: Store condoms under mattress...Eroticize condom use with partner...Use condoms as a method of foreplay...Think up a sexual fantasy using condoms...Act sexy/sensual when putting the condom on...Hide them on your body and ask your partner to find it...Tease each other manually while putting on the condom.” (p. 75)

- *Focus on Kids* (ages 9-15) –

“Assigns teens to create a list of ways to be close to a person without having intercourse, including, body massage, bathing together, masturbation, sensuous feeding, fantasizing, watching erotic movies, reading erotic books and magazines.” (p. 137)

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<sup>5</sup> Shannan Martin, Robert Rector, Melissa Pardue, *Comprehensive Sex Education Versus Authentic Abstinence: A Study of Competing Curricula*, Heritage Foundation, 2004.

“Youth will practice the proper way to put on a condom...Divide youth into two teams and give everyone a condom. Have the teams stand in two lines and give the first person in each line a dildo or cucumber. Each person on the team must put the condom on the dildo or cucumber and take it off...The team that finishes first wins.” (p. 108)

- Reducing the Risk (for high school)

“Teenagers can obtain birth control pills from family planning clinics and doctors without permission from a parent: Truth. You do not need a parent’s permission to get birth control at a clinic. No one needs to know...” (p. 137)

“Condoms are available at any drugstore or family planning clinic. They may also be available in outdoor or all-night condom vending machines. Anyone can buy condoms, regardless of age, and no prescription is needed.” (p. 110)

- Teen Talk (ages 13-19)

“Show condoms. Have several different brands including lubricated and reservoir tip. Open packages and unroll condoms for students to inspect. You may pass them around. Use plastic model of penis or two fingers for demonstration...You may blow up rubber to demonstrate how strong they are.” (p. 16)

- Get Real About AIDS (for high school)

Homework assignment to go shopping for condoms: “Tell students that the object of the activity is for teams to determine how difficult it is to find condoms.... When you get to the store, ask an employee where the condoms are, even if you already know. The idea is for you to describe the response of the employee. Complete the work sheet as well as you can. If the store you identified has no condoms, then go to another store. Remember, this isn’t a game. This is a way to get important information to stay safe.” (p. 130)

Many of these comprehensive sex education programs are recommended based on studies claiming their effectiveness in reducing sexual activity and increasing condom use among minors - clearly contradictory goals.

The design of these studies is flawed and therefore the results are clearly biased. For example, *one study on the Focus on Kids program (taught to children as young as age nine) gave out condoms as part of the intervention and found that the children were more likely to use condoms after the program.* Another study paid students \$5 an hour for participation and others offered incentives such as free condoms for participation.<sup>6</sup> The average age of students involved in the studies of programs recommended by the CDC is 15 years. It is important to note that the age of consent for sexual activity in most states is 16.

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<sup>6</sup> See Youth Section of: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/hivcompendium/hivcompendium.htm>

None of the studies of the studies discussed whether participating students were informed of age of consent laws, sexual abuse laws or statutory rape laws. This is particularly important as studies show that a majority of youth who become sexually active at a young age have been forced or pressured into sex. In fact, 74% of women who had intercourse before age 14 and 60% of those who had sex before age 15 report having had a forced sexual experience.<sup>7</sup> Further research is necessary to determine whether the federal government is actually recommending contraceptive sex education programs that promote sexual activity among minors and/or fail to address child sexual abuse.

For the reasons explained above, we are requesting that GAO review HHS' processes for determining the accuracy and effectiveness of comprehensive sex education programs. Specifically, we request that GAO:

- Provide a current analysis of federal spending for teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention programs.
- Provide a list of the curricula/written materials utilized in federally-funded teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention programs.
- Assess whether and how HHS has reviewed or is currently reviewing the content of materials used in federally funded teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention programs, including whether these programs contain graphic sexual content and medical accuracy.
- Assess whether and how evaluations of federally-funded teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention programs have been conducted by impartial researchers with no conflicts of interest and whether applicable state and federal laws were followed in the collection of data.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Donald A. Manzullo Lynda P. P. P.

Marilyn Musgrave W. Colleen

Phil Jung

<sup>7</sup> The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), *Sex and America's Teenagers*, New York, 1994, pp. 19 & 22.

Tom Fenney

Dave Weldon

Steve King

Virgil Gooden

John Hattler

Lonnie Hunt

Sam Cole

Randy McPherson

Bob

Bob Merrill

Ernst - Stock

John

Mark Anderson

Jeff Fortington  
Haynes

John T. Dorlitt

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## Signatures

1. Rep. Manzullo
2. Rep. Pitts
3. Rep. Musgrave
4. Rep. Akin
5. Rep. Gingrey
6. Rep. Feeney
7. Rep. Dave Weldon
8. Rep. Steve King
9. Rep. Goode
10. Rep. Hostettler
11. Rep. Gohmert
12. Rep. Cole
13. Rep. Neugebauer
14. Rep. Rob Bishop
15. Rep. Hensarling
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17. Rep. Terry
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20. Rep. Doolittle
21. Rep. Lahood