

U.S. Official Attacks AIDS Plan

By Judith Randal
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Washington — The AIDS plan endorsed by U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop, calling for early sex education and other measures to help prevent spread of the disease, has been sharply criticized in an Education Department memorandum that says the plan was formulated with "a public health framework" and thus "de-emphasizes moral considerations."

The Dec. 3 memo, written by Jack Klenk of the Education Department and sent to the Department of Health and Human Services, which had asked for comment on the plan, differs sharply from Koop's highly publicized view that "it is time to put self-defeating attitudes aside and recognize that we are fighting a disease, not people."

The Klenk memo said the plan doesn't mention that "irresponsible sexual behavior . . . is the main cause of the spread of AIDS."

Klenk is director of issues analysis at the department. In the copy of his memo obtained by Newday, he also said that Education Secretary William Bennett "opposes explicit teaching of AIDS in the third grade."

In Koop's AIDS report of Oct. 22, prepared at the request of President Ronald Reagan, Koop advocated strong sex education in the home and at school "at the lowest grade possible."

In his report Koop, generally regarded as a conservative, disapproved of sex among teenagers, but said it was important for children to grow up "knowing the behaviors to avoid to protect themselves from exposure to the AIDS virus." His advice was to begin sex education at the point when youngsters start to ask questions about sex, which, he said, is usually by the third grade.

Although the Klenk memo refers specifically to a draft plan on acquired immune deficiency syndrome being formulated by HHS, the draft closely parallels other recommendations Koop made in his report.

Klenk's memo is critical of many of those, as well. For instance, Koop urged that the results of blood screening tests for AIDS

antibodies be kept confidential. But Klenk asks "if there isn't good reason to believe that local health authorities should be informed of AIDS test results?"

Similarly, he takes issue with an HHS statement that "AIDS is not an excuse to discriminate" because the virus is not transmissible by ordinary, nonsexual personal contact. According to Klenk, the statement conflicts with the Justice Department's view that fear of contagion may justify discrimination against carriers of the virus.

Also a target of Klenk's criticism is an HHS recommendation that community distribution of condoms may be an effective way to reduce the spread of AIDS.

"Provision of condoms to unmarrieds equals sex outside of marriage . . ." Klenk's memo says. "Dispensing condoms to unmarrieds spreads the condition which facilitates the spread of AIDS, namely multiple-partner sex."

Marion Blakey, an Education Department spokeswoman, said the department would not comment on the memo because it had been intended only for internal use.



Dr. Everett Koop