

Department of Health

108 Cherry Street, P.O. Box 70
Burlington, VT 05402-0070

healthvermont.gov

Agency of Education

219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641

education.vermont.gov

To: Superintendents, Principals and Headmasters
From: Harry Chen, M.D., Commissioner, Department of Health
Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary, Agency of Education
Subject: Comprehensive Sex Education and Condom Distribution Programs
Date: November 22, 2016

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently announced that the total combined cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis (STDs) reported in 2015 reached their highest number [ever](#). The data show that Americans 15 to 24 years old accounted for nearly two-thirds of chlamydia and half of all gonorrhea diagnoses.

Over the last 15 years, at least 80 percent of chlamydia cases diagnosed annually in our state have been among Vermonters 24 years of age or younger. [The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), a survey of about 40,000 Vermont youth in school grades six through 12, found that nearly one-third (31 percent) reported having had sex in the past three months. Among sexually active students, only 58 percent reported using a condom during their most recent sexual intercourse, greatly increasing their chances of contracting an STD or HIV as well as the risk of an unintended pregnancy.

Recommendations —

To address these trends, and to promote and protect the health of young Vermonters, we recommend that school districts and supervisory unions have in place policies and procedures to implement [comprehensive sex education](#) and [Condom Distribution Programs](#).

[Research](#) shows that well-designed, well-implemented school-based STD prevention programs can significantly reduce sexual risk behaviors among students. Outcomes of such programs include a delay in first sexual intercourse, a decrease in the number of sex partners and an increase in condom or contraceptive use. There is no evidence of increased likelihood of students having sex through participation in such programs.

Condom availability should be supported as a key element of comprehensive sex education. Condoms, used consistently and correctly, reduce the risk of STD and HIV transmission. The [effectiveness of condoms](#) has been demonstrated by both laboratory and epidemiologic studies, and condom distribution programs have been proven to increase condom use, prevent HIV/STDs and save health care costs. The most effective condom distribution programs provide

condoms free of charge, and are conducted in locations that are readily accessible and where organizational support is evident.

We encourage you to design a condom distribution program that meets the unique needs of your local communities. School Health Advisory Councils should work together with school personnel and school board members to ensure support for implementation.

For more information and guidance about statewide programs or policies administered at the local level, contact the [Health Department District Office](#) that serves your community.