
STATEMENT TO YOUTH ON SCHOOL-BASED CLINICS



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

MARCH 23, 1988

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we are writing to you, the youth of our country, about a very important concern that touches your life.

Human sexuality is a gift from God and an important part of your total personality. Integrating your sexuality with all the facets of your life is a lifelong process that can be most difficult in the teen years when you face so many changes and challenges.

Human sexuality is also a gift that is designed for the total union of a man and woman in marriage. This union expresses the deepest form of human intimacy and is meant to enrich the life-giving love and commitment of married couples.

We know the pressures you face every day to become involved in sexual activity. We know that some young people do become sexually involved and that a number of teenage girls become pregnant each year.

You may also be aware of an effort to set up clinics in your schools to provide contraceptive services as a solution to teenage pregnancies. This is something that is happening all over the country. Many people think that the only way to help you cope with your sexuality is to provide you with contraceptives. They assume that young people will be involved in sexual activity and cannot achieve the self-control that will lead to healthy physical and spiritual growth.

We know that there are better solutions. Because we care about you and your growth and development, we would like to help you develop healthy attitudes about sexuality. We want you to understand that school-based clinics will present *real* dilemmas that you must face. We want to support you in living in a way that will lead to true and lasting happiness for you.

Let's look at some of the claims made by supporters of school-based clinics.

Claim #1: School-based clinics assume that you will be sexually active and cannot learn how to make wise and responsible choices about sexuality. Their solution is to give you contraceptives.

Response: We do not believe that sexual activity among young people is inevitable. In fact,



clinics may even promote the attitude that everyone is sexually active. That is certainly not true. We believe in your ability to choose another way of living—to learn the positive values of honesty, responsibility, promise-keeping, self-control, commitment, and respect for the other person that will help you to reserve your sexual activity for marriage.

Claim #2: School-based clinics claim that making contraceptives available to you will reduce teenage pregnancy.

Response: Even though contraceptives are widely promoted in our society, especially through commercials and advertisements, they have *not* led to fewer teenage pregnancies. We believe that the wide availability of contraceptives confirms teenagers in their harmful sexual behavior. You are being told to deal with your sexuality by using pills and devices, instead of learning about the beauty of sexuality in God's plan and the responsible values that will help you grow as a sexual person. The only 100 percent safe way to avoid an unwed pregnancy is to reserve sexual activity for marriage.

Claim #3: School-based clinics lead you to believe that contraceptives can prevent all of the negative consequences of teenage sexual activity.

Response: Premarital sexual activity *has* adverse consequences for you. There *are* serious medical, emotional, moral, and spiritual consequences of premature sexual activity. Clinics deceive you by not telling you about the physical and emotional realities of sexuality and by failing to teach you about the responsibilities of sexual intimacy. Please remember: for unmarried teenagers, the *only* sure way to avoid the sexual transmission of AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease is to refrain from sexual activity.

Claim #4: School-based clinics say they must give young people information about abortion and refer them to abortion clinics in order to provide a comprehensive answer to teenage pregnancy.

Response: Abortion is not the answer! Abortion not only destroys the unborn child, but it also has severe emotional and physical consequences for the teenage mother, and may have emotional consequences for the father as well. In a society that already contains far too much violence, adults should be helping young people to deal with the problems of pregnancy without promoting the violent solution of abortion.

Claim #5: School-based clinics lead you to believe that once you have become sexually active you will always be sexually active.

Response: Teachers and counselors do not assume that teenagers cannot understand the harm of drugs and alcohol simply because they have experimented with them. In fact, people are encouraged to "Say No to Drugs!" and are helped to overcome drug and alcohol abuse. The same is true for teenagers who have been sexually active. They can learn responsible values and change their behavior. We believe in your ability to change for the better, to open yourself to a morally responsible way of life.



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Premarital sexual intercourse is a risky venture, a behavior that will violate your moral principles and your hopes for happiness. We know that pressures from our society to become sexually active are great. We encourage you to resist these pressures—to say NO to premarital sexual activity.

We challenge local communities across the country to drop the idea of school-based clinics. In their place, we encourage schools, parents, and churches to:

- provide you with the best information about human sexuality—how it is a marvelous gift from God that should not be abused;
- help you to think critically about the sexual messages you find on television, in songs, in music videos, in advertisements; and to compare these messages with the positive understanding of human sexuality that you are learning;
- teach you honesty, moral responsibility, promise-keeping, self-control, commitment, and respect for other persons to help you reserve sexual activity for marriage;
- support you in living these positive, healthy values.

We the Catholic bishops of the United States pledge our energies in working with you, your families, and your schools to help build a society in which the positive values of human sexuality will be lived and appreciated.

The Statement to Youth on School-based Clinics was prepared by the NCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities, approved by the NCCB Administrative Committee on March 23, 1988, and authorized for publication by the undersigned as a statement of the Administrative Committee.

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NCCB/USCC

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