

THE HEALTHY TEENS ACT (A. 1806)

In response to a serious public health need in New York State, the Assembly and Senate introduced legislation to establish a funding stream for age-appropriate sex education programs. The Healthy Teens Act (A.1806), introduced by Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried and previously by Senator George Winner, establishes a competitive grant program through the NYS Department of Health for the specific purpose of awarding grants to school districts, boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), school-based health centers and community-based organizations for age-appropriate sex education programs.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Create a competitive grant program to support age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.
- Define eligible grant applicants to include school districts, boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), school-based health centers (SBHC) and community-based organizations (CBO) with five years experience providing such programs.
- Award 80% of funds to programs conducted by public school districts and/or BOCES, including those programs that are conducted under partnerships or consortiums formed by public school district and/or BOCES and one or more CBO or SBHC; 20% of funds will be awarded to CBOs and SBHCs that are not in partnership.
- Give priority to grant applicants in consortiums or partnerships formed by a public school district and/or BOCES and one ore more CBO or SBHC.
- Provide special consideration and weight to eligible applicants based on the community's need for an age-appropriate sex education program. Data to be considered include: the number of adolescent pregnancies, adolescent parents, and single parents in the community; the number of STD and HIV/AIDS cases among residents in the community; income level or number of persons receiving free or reduced lunch or other data indicating the area to be economically or otherwise disadvantaged; and the high school drop-out rate.
- Provide 5% of funds dedicated to evaluation of the statewide program by a nationally recognized and accredited organization following year two.
- Provide 4% of funds dedicated to evaluation following the full five-year period.

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Specifically, the bill would:

- **Require eligible programs to substantially involve parents and other adults.**
- **Outline the following components of instruction for eligible programs*.**

An eligible program:

- a. is age-appropriate and medically accurate;
 - b. does not teach or promote religion (but can include discussion of moral, ethical, or religious views related to sex or sexual relationships);
 - c. teaches that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases;**
 - d. stresses the value of abstinence while not ignoring those adolescents who have had or who are having sexual intercourse;**
 - e. provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to prevent pregnancy;
 - f. provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and other diseases;
 - g. provides information about the vaccine for human papilloma virus, which may prevent cervical cancer, genital wart, infertility, and other reproductive health problems, when administered prior to becoming sexually active;
 - h. encourages family communication about sexuality among parents, other adult household members and children;**
 - i. teaches skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality, including how to respond to unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances, and how not to make unwanted verbal, physical and sexual advances;**
 - j. teaches how alcohol and drug use can affect responsible decision making;
 - k. helps young people gain knowledge about the physical, biological and hormonal changes of adolescence and subsequent stages of human maturation;
 - l. develops the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure and protect young people with respects to their sexual and reproductive health;
 - m. assists young people in gaining knowledge about the specific involvement of, and responsibility of both males and females in sexual decision making;
 - n. develops healthy attitudes and values concerning growth and development, body image, gender roles, sexual orientation and other subjects;
 - o. encourages young people to practice healthy life skills including goal setting, decision-making, negotiation, and communication and stress management;
 - p. promotes self-esteem and positive interpersonal skills focusing on relationship skills, including platonic, romantic, intimate and family relationships and interaction and how to avoid relationship abuse;
 - q. is based on theoretical projects that have been demonstrated to influence health behavior.
- The bill notes that it is not necessary for the grantee to address every component of instruction, with the exception of points a and b, which are mandatory. Further, no program may include information or messages that contradict any of the components.