

How You Can Help Promote Abstinence Until Marriage

As a community we are all interested and concerned about teen sexuality issues. STDs are now at near epidemic rates and pose a real threat to our teenagers. You can help by understanding what abstinence is, and what it is not. Abstinence means not having any sexual contact. That doesn't mean the person doesn't have any sexual feelings. It does mean choosing to exercise self-control and self-discipline in not acting on those sexual feelings.

As our teens navigate the turbulent years of adolescence they need our encouragement and understanding. Young people sometimes think "everyone is doing it". They're not. Studies show that the majority of teens have not had sex by the time they graduate from high school. Remind teenagers that they can be popular and "cool" without having sex. This can reinforce what they are learning in school about the advantages of an abstinent until marriage life-style.

The more information you have the more knowledge you can share with teens, and in the hands of teenagers, knowledge is power.

The Abstinence Program has a number of videos and books available to help adults learn more about teen sexuality and other related issues. We are also available to do parent workshops and presentations on the Abstinence Program.

For more information about
Boone County's Abstinence Program
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**Promoting
Sexual
Abstinence**

**Boone County's
Abstinence
Education Program**

What You Should Know About the Abstinence Program

The Boone County Health Department was awarded its first federal grant to promote sexual abstinence in our community in 1998. Since that time the abstinence program has expanded and is now taught in seven schools in both School District 100 and 200, which includes Belvidere High School and North Boone High School.

Specifically students are encouraged to make the decision to remain abstinent until marriage through:

- Clear communication of the physical and emotional risks of being sexually active.
- Group directed discussions that encourage abstinence and lead to real changes in attitudes.
- Proves abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- Self-esteem building exercises that help teens value who they are, the choices they make, and enhance their ability to resist peer pressure.
- Factual information about sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems.
- Shows young people how to reject sexual advances; how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances.

Some of the Goals of the Abstinence Education Program

The only sure method of protecting our teens from pregnancy and STDs, and the potential emotional, psychological, and social consequences of early sexual activity, is abstinence until marriage. No decision will affect the future well being of our young teens as significantly as the choice they make about their sexual behavior.

Abstinence education helps students consider their goals and dreams and helps them learn that self control, respect, and responsibility greatly increase their chances of having a strong marriage.

Teens who choose abstinence are less likely to engage in other risky behaviors, such as drinking, smoking and using drugs.

Students respond to a clearly reasoned and positive presentation of the benefits of abstinence. As abstinence programs have expanded nationally, the CDC reports that the rate of sexual activity among teens has been steadily declining. Teens appreciate the encouragement and support that we provide through abstinence education.

Contrary to what most people think, the majority of teens are not sexually active. According to the CDC, only about 36% of high school students are considered sexually active and 75% of high school sophomores are virgins. Teens want to learn how to resist negative pressure from peers and the media

Here's Why Abstinence Education Works

By giving our teens the information and training they need, they discover *for themselves* that abstinence until marriage is their best choice for a healthy life. Here are a few examples of what Boone County teens are saying after completing the program:

"Abstinence is the only way to protect yourself."

"One reason abstinence till marriage is a good idea is so we could minimize the growing rate of STDs. The best reason is for your personal health because condoms and birth control don't always work."

"You can choose your own path, control your own life, plan your future, respect yourself and think clearly about things like school."

"Others will respect you and you will have no regrets."

"You can reach your goals more easily and not have a baby or emotional distress to get in your way."

"Abstinence is the only 100% efficient way to be free from pregnancy and STDs."

"Before this class I never knew the importance. It is only fair to save yourself until marriage and to share your first time with the person you will be with until death."

"You would have a good life and feel proud of yourself."