

Explanation of New York City Public Schools' Condom Availability Program

NOTE: Condom Availability is for *High Schools Only*

Since 1987, New York State Education Commissioner's Regulations have required every school district in the state to provide instruction to students in every grade about the nature of HIV infection, methods of transmission, and methods of prevention. The information must be accurate, age-appropriate, and consistent with the community's values. Abstinence from sexual intercourse must be stressed as the most appropriate and effective protection against HIV infection. Schools are encouraged to inform parents or legal guardians that the HIV lessons will be taught. Parents or legal guardians can file a written request with the principal to exempt their children from the lessons on methods of prevention if they agree to give their children such instruction at home.

In Kindergarten through Grade 6, students are given five lessons on HIV/AIDS each year. All junior and senior high schools in New York City must teach at least six HIV/AIDS lessons in every grade.

Since 1991, New York State Regulations have also permitted school districts to set up programs to make condoms available to students who participate in the instructional program, once they ensure that students have been provided with comprehensive guidance about their personal health risks in using condoms and that condoms are provided by trained and adequately supervised school or health service personnel. In February 1991, in response to statistics showing that New York City teenagers were at high risk of being infected with HIV, the New York City Board of Education approved a policy to expand and improve its HIV/AIDS education program. The expanded program included a comprehensive new HIV/AIDS curriculum for all grades; an HIV/AIDS education team in every high school, which included students, parents/guardians, and faculty; an HIV/AIDS information session for parents/guardians of high school students; and a condom availability program for high school students.

Condoms are made available in every high school by trained male and female volunteer staff members in "Health Resource Rooms" (designated rooms in the school open ten or more periods each week at set times). Parents or legal guardians have the right to request that their children be exempted from the condom availability program. Their children's identification numbers are placed on a list (names are not included) to ensure that they will not participate. For all other students, the program is confidential and students are not required to identify themselves by name or to prove that they have permission from their parents to use the resource room.

Health information, counseling and referrals are provided to any student who accepts them when offered or who asks for them. All students are eligible to receive these health resource room services. Students are not required to receive counseling in order to receive condoms. When students request condoms, they can request a condom demonstration or written instructions on correct condom use. For more information, visit the Condom Availability Program at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Health/OtherHealthForms/HealthResource.htm>.