

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE USE  
April 29, 2003

Contact: John Stieger  
MDH Communications Office  
(651) 215-1301  
[john.stieger@health.state.mn.us](mailto:john.stieger@health.state.mn.us)

Jill Briggs  
Family Health  
(651) 281-9781  
[Jill.briggs@health.state.mn.us](mailto:Jill.briggs@health.state.mn.us)

## **New Campaign Urges Teens and Adults to Talk Straight About Teen Pregnancy**

The Minnesota Department of Health's MN ENABL (Minnesota Education Now and Babies Later) program this month launched an education campaign to raise awareness about what teens and adults can do to prevent teen pregnancy. One of the goals of the campaign is to urge parents to talk straight with their children about the consequences and risks associated with sexual activity.

"We know that if children are taught early how to make healthy decisions and handle peer pressure, they're more likely to avoid risky behavior when they're older," said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dianne Mandernach. "We need to encourage teens and adults to talk straight with one another so we can prevent young people from making bad choices that can lead to a lifetime of challenges."

Everyday in Minnesota, an average of five babies are born to girls under 18. Teens with babies often interrupt or discontinue their education, have difficulty finding jobs that pay well, and seek government assistance to meet the many demands of raising a child.

Good communication between adults and teens can help prevent teen pregnancy. In fact, teens often cite parents as much more influential than friends when it comes to making decisions about sexual activity. Nearly seven out of ten teens agree it would be easier for them to postpone sexual activity if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.

An education campaign started this month to help promote straight talk between adults and teens, and communities around the state are planning a variety of activities for May, National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month.

The education campaign consists of several components:

- **Teen-focused ad campaign.** Starting this week, teens will be getting the "Say Not Yet to Sex" message through a new series of ads airing on radio stations and in movie theaters. The ads feature teens using creative ways to say "not yet."

**-more-**

## ENABL Campaign—page 2

- **Adult-focused ad campaign.** Through television and radio ads, the “Talk Straight, and I Will Listen” campaign encourages parents and other trusted adults to communicate with teens about this often-difficult topic.
- **www.SayNotYet.com Web site.** This Web site provides resources for teens and adults. Teens can go to the Web site for tips on how to say “not yet” to sex. Parents and other concerned adults can go to the Web site for tips, advice and resources for communicating with teens. Handout cards with the most important tips will be available in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong.

Fourteen young teens from across Minnesota are working with MN ENABL to help guide the public education campaign. Called the Not Yet Net youth advisory council, the teens are planning outreach activities in their local communities for National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. The council is focusing especially on May 7<sup>th</sup>, National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, by designing an ad to run in local newspapers and asking schools and community centers to open up their computer labs so that teens can go online to [www.saynotyet.com](http://www.saynotyet.com) and take a quiz about teen pregnancy.

Adults are also invited to go to [www.saynotyet.com](http://www.saynotyet.com) on May 7 to test their knowledge about teen pregnancy and to sign a pledge to talk straight to a teen.

The public education campaign kicks off a new round of teen pregnancy prevention grants recently awarded by MN ENABL to organizations across the state. Twenty-three community organizations, schools and local public health agencies across Minnesota received three-year \$45,000 grants for programs aimed at 12- to 14-year-olds, their parents, and communities. Grant requirements include conducting community organizing activities, implementing school curriculum, and participating in the statewide education campaign. The grantees span the state from Austin to International Falls and serve communities as varied as school districts, ethnic populations, inner-city neighborhoods and counties.

Commissioner Mandernach applauded the grantees and other partners for coming together to prevent teen pregnancy. She specifically acknowledged several partners—including Hennepin County, the Saint Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health, and the Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting (MOAPPP)—for joining forces with MN ENABL to pay for the “Talk Straight, and I Will Listen” ad campaign for adults.

“The additional funding provided through this partnership has allowed us to significantly increase our media reach, not just in the Twin Cities but throughout the state,” Mandernach said. “Working in unison, we will send a consistent message to Minnesota parents about the importance of talking straight with their children.”

## ABOUT MN ENABL

The Minnesota Department of Health launched Minnesota Education Now And Babies Later (MN ENABL) in 1996. MN ENABL works with teens ages 12-14, their families, and communities to help the teens learn refusal skills and postpone sex. The program uses a three-pronged approach: community organizing, curriculum implementation (taught by teens and adults), and a statewide awareness campaign. MN ENABL’s Web site, [www.saynotyet.com](http://www.saynotyet.com), gives teens actual ways to stay in charge of their lives and say “not yet” to sex, and it offers adults resources for communicating with teens.