

Statement on Aids Prevention **December 1993**

WHEREAS, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and infection with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) the virus that causes AIDS, are serious threats to the lives and health of young people in Massachusetts. HIV is transmitted through unprotected sexual intercourse and through blood-to-blood contact, such as that which occurs when intravenous needles are shared.

AND WHEREAS, Teenagers are at high risk for contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In Massachusetts, adolescents account for nearly a quarter of gonorrhea, syphilis and Chlamydia cases. Young adults 20-29 years of age represent 20% of all AIDS cases reported in Massachusetts. Because of the long incubation period of HIV, it is likely that half of them were infected with HIV in their teens. In light of the vulnerability of teenagers to HIV infection, it is essential that we do all in our power to prevent young people from becoming infected.

AND WHEREAS, In an effort to reverse these trends the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health recommends: a comprehensive health education curriculum (K-12) which includes AIDS prevention and decision making skills. The curriculum must provide age appropriate information and promote abstinence as the surest way to prevent infection. The Commissioner is also asking schools as part of this comprehensive approach to make condoms available to older teens who are sexually active.

AND WHEREAS, The Massachusetts Board of Education's Policy on AIDS/HIV Prevention Education states that AIDS/HIV prevention education should include information about sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the value of both sexual abstinence and the use of condoms as disease prevention methods. The Board further recommends that every school committee, in consultation with superintendents, administrators, faculty, parents and students consider making condoms available in their secondary schools.

THEREFORE, In light of the statements issued by the Commissioner of Public Health and the Massachusetts Board of Education, the Harwich Board of Health has voted to support these policies. Given the increasing incidence of HIV occurrence particularly among the teen population, the Board of Health has unanimously voted to recommend the inclusion of condom availability within the context of a comprehensive health education program at the secondary school level as a necessary public health measure.

Adopted December 15, 1993

HARWICH BOARD OF HEALTH

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