



The Centers for Disease Control tell us that many young persons in the United States engage in risky sexual behavior and experience negative reproductive health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The story is told not only in the physical life-altering consequences that include teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, but also in emotional harm that can at times manifest itself in depression and suicidal ideation. Finally, the millions of parents and educators who knew that to be true have an official authority backing them up.

Identifying risk is one thing, having a plan to deal with it is another. The key to helping young people avoid risk and make healthy choices is a three-pronged approach: the right information, a realistic application to one's life, and sincere encouragement and support. In other words, give teens the facts and help them to believe that they can make difficult, yet wise, choices in their own best interest.

Since 2004, we have been working toward those goals. We saw that schools needed to address the Core Curriculum Content Standards for Human Relationships and Sexuality (2.4) as well as be in compliance with New Jersey's AIDS Prevention Act. To meet those requirements, we developed upbeat, interactive and enjoyable lessons. The resultant New Jersey-specific curricula titled *YES You Can!* effectively address the needs of our students and educators.<sup>2</sup> To date, these curricula have been taught to over 10,000 New Jersey middle and high school students.

A DVD for educators, with lesson-by-lesson video training, comes with each level of the curricula. We also provide full school in-service sessions that award continuing education hours; we work with school staff in developing an approach that encompasses the whole school; student assemblies experience our thought-provoking presentation, *Teen Sexual Activity ~ So What's The Big Deal Anyway?*; and, because it goes without saying that parents are key to successful teens, we provide them with help, encouragement and skills through the *Keeping Your Kids Safe in a Sex-Saturated Culture* workshop. Empowered parents and educators help young people maximize their opportunity for a healthy adulthood!

Our teens, more than ever, need us to be honest and straightforward because it is from our guidance that they make health decisions which have life-long consequences. The New Jersey Physicians Advisory Group is poised to educate, inform and empower New Jersey students by reaching the adults that serve them with cutting edge, current and accurate information.

For the health of our young people,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Cowan".

Peggy Cowan  
Founder and President

<sup>1</sup> [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5806a1.htm?s\\_cid=ss5806a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5806a1.htm?s_cid=ss5806a1_e)

<sup>2</sup> 83% of program participants evaluated reported a positive effect on their decision-making to wait for sexual involvement, with fully 18% reporting it convinced them to wait. *Institute for Research & Evaluation*