

Section 16-40A-1

Legislative Findings; Purpose of Chapter.

(a) The Legislature finds that:

(1) Pregnancy and childbirth among unmarried adolescents, particularly young adolescents, often results in severe adverse health, social, and economic consequences, including: a higher percentage of pregnancy and childbirth complications; a higher incidence of low birth weight babies; a higher frequency of developmental disabilities; higher infant mortality and morbidity; a decreased likelihood of completing school; a greater likelihood that an adolescent marriage will end in divorce; and higher risks of unemployment and welfare dependency.

(2) Drug and alcohol abuse diminish the strength and vitality of the young people of our nation and state; an increasing number of substances, both legal and illegal, are being abused by increasing numbers of school children, even at the grade school level; abuse of any substance causes human behavior that influences many forces, including school, family, church, community, media, and peer groups. Prevention and early intervention in such behavior requires cooperation and coordination involving strategies designed to respond to carefully defined problems in which the education system of the state can play an important role.

(b) The purposes of this chapter are:

(1) To find effective means, within the context of the school environment, of reaching adolescents before they become sexually active in order to maximize the guidance and support available to adolescents from teachers, parents, and other family members, and to promote self discipline and other prudent approaches to the problem of premarital sexual relations of adolescents, including adolescent pregnancy.

(2) To encourage the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse among children in the public schools; to stimulate the development of improved approaches to the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse; to demonstrate the use of such approaches in model educational programs and to evaluate the effectiveness thereof; to disseminate successful approaches and significant information for use in educational programs throughout the public schools; and to provide training programs for school administrators, teachers, and counselors.

(Acts 1992, No. 92-590, p. 1216, §1.)