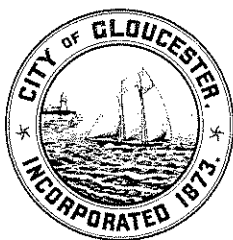


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CITY OF GLOUCESTER OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

PRESS RELEASE: June 23, 2008

Issued by Mayor Carolyn A. Kirk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn A. Kirk", is written over the printed name of the Mayor.

Teenage pregnancy is nothing new and it is complex. Gloucester is not alone in wrestling with this issue. Other cities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have experienced sudden spikes in teen pregnancy rates in the last year according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

I am Carolyn Kirk, Mayor of Gloucester. I am joined by the Chairman of the Gloucester School Committee, Greg Verga; Superintendent of Schools, Christopher Farmer; and the city's Public Health Director, Jack Vondras.

We have a couple of brief statements to make. Then, we will take a few questions from the press.

The Alleged Pact

1. We have not been able to confirm the existence of a pact.
2. We are seeking to understand whether it is based on fact or rumor.
3. The privacy of our students and their families is our number one concern. There will be no more comments about particular students in our high school.

Contraceptive Policy – Gloucester Public Schools

1. Policy decisions regarding the distribution of contraceptives to students rest solely with the Gloucester School Committee.
2. School policy does not permit the distribution of contraceptives to our students.

Health Education

1. Budget cuts over the past 6 years have forced the elimination of almost 100 teachers and staff in our school department resulting in cuts to programs and services for Gloucester children – including support for health education.
2. Meeting the underfunded mandates of No Child Left Behind, performance on standardized tests, and the needs of our children beyond what is mandated, remains a concern of our community.

Adult Males / Minor Children

1. All School and city health department employees along with all medical staff are required by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 119 Section 51A to report suspected abuse or neglect of minor children.

Gloucester's Response – In process since last year

There are three dimensions to the City of Gloucester's response to the issue of teen pregnancy:

1. The City of Gloucester and the Gloucester School Committee recognize that parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children. They are ultimately responsible for the health and well-being of their children.
2. With that said, there is a role for the city's Public Health Department and School Committee to play.

With regard to the families, in the interest of protecting and respecting the privacy of Gloucester families, there will be no further comments about specific Gloucester children.

The Public Health Department:

The Health Department has recently completed a comprehensive community health needs assessment in 2006. Regarding teen pregnancy rates and sexual behavior, Gloucester rates were very similar to statewide averages from 2003 – 2005. The Public Health Department has been charged with bringing forth a multi-faceted approach to this public health problem including the following:

- In conjunction with the School Department, review of health education programs that have proven effective in reducing teen pregnancy;
- Access to contraception methods;
- Family involvement with health education with their children regarding sexual behavior in teen years.

There are other public health concerns associated with teen pregnancy such as risk-taking behavior like alcohol and drug use, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. All of these concerns will be formulated in the City's multifaceted approach.

The School Committee:

1. All policy decisions regarding what occurs in our schools rest solely with the Gloucester School Committee.
2. The School Committee will take up the complex issue of addressing teen pregnancy as it relates to the School District over the next 2 months.
3. It is anticipated that policy decisions will be in place prior to the start of the next school year.
4. We are bringing in experts, research-based information, as well as examples of what works in other school districts in order to guide the School Committee to comprehensive approach that is in the best interest of Gloucester children, our families and our community.
5. Gloucester residents will be encouraged to participate in the dialogue.

We will take no questions about case work. Anyone involved in individual cases is obligated to protect the confidentiality of the individuals involved. We will be happy to take questions about the steps the City is taking, and the process by which the School Committee will arrive at policy decisions that are in the best interest of our students, and our community.