

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Teen suicide and HIV rates concern Measure 9 foes

In a recent report released by the Oregon Department of Human Services, 16 percent of high school students responding to a statewide survey in 1999 said they seriously had considered suicide during the previous 12 months. About 6 percent said they had attempted suicide.

According to the survey, an estimated 39,000 Oregon youth report feeling a sadness or hopelessness that interfered with their daily activities for a period of at least two weeks. Opponents of Measure 9 say sexual minority youth will be at even greater risk for depression, suicide attempts and suicide should it pass.

A disturbing 29 percent of students reported experiencing one or more kinds of harassment: sexual harassment, racial or ethnic harassment and harassment for perceived sexual orientation. Oregon's suicide rate among 10- to 24-year-olds is 30 percent higher than the national average.

Outraged opponents of Measure 9 say AIDS education would be one of the first things eliminated from public schools should it pass. They insist HIV prevention education never has been more important: Recent trends show young people and people of color

are at particularly high risks for infection.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance, once clear that it wanted to eliminate HIV education, now says Measure 9 wouldn't affect the subject. Critics say the organization is bluffing.

Here are some pertinent facts:

Oregon's suicide rate among 10- to 24-year-olds is 30 percent higher than the national average.

- HIV is the leading cause of death for African Americans between 25 and 44 years old.

- Among 13- to 24-year-olds males, nine out of 100 cases of HIV transmission occurred heterosexually.

- Among 13- to 24-year-old females, 47 of 100 cases of HIV transmission occurred heterosexually.

- 62 of 100 cases of HIV cases in 13- to 19-year-olds are females.

- 56 of 100 cases of HIV cases in 13- to 19-year-olds are young African Americans. **JE**



Cleveland High School students express themselves during a No On 9 rally Oct. 17

AIR STRIKES

Parents share their story in a powerful television ad

Larry Schwitters' daughter, Dawn, lost her life to AIDS. He and his wife, Sally, volunteered to share their story for a No on 9 television commercial about their tragic loss.

"This ad will let Oregon parents know the risk that their children face if Measure 9 passes," said Kathleen Sullivan, No on 9 Campaign manager, in a press release. "We are honored that Larry and Sally have taken the time to make this ad to help us defeat this dangerous measure."

Opponents insist Measure 9 would result in the elimination of crucial AIDS education in public schools throughout the state. The programs are of particular importance, professionals say, because of the increasing danger young people face.

More than one-half of new HIV infections in the country occur in men and women younger than 25. Experts say many of these infections occur during the teen years.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance has commercials running on radio and cable television. No on 9 Campaign officials said they are unaware of any Yes on 9 ads airing on local network affiliates. **JE**

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