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Educating Teens



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Getting ready to implement new sex education programs from the Planned Parenthood's headquarters on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard are Camelia Hison, vice president of education for Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette (from left), and Amanda McLaughlin and Bianca Taveras, education coordinators for the local organization. Teen pregnancy prevention in the Portland area will see a major boost in funding and direction thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A new direction for sex ed

Teen pregnancy prevention programs in Portland and the Pacific Northwest will get a major boost of financial support and change of direction because of a new sex education policy that's a departure from the former Bush administration's abstinence-only directives.

The Northwest Coalition for Adolescent Health has been awarded \$20 million by the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to replicate a proven, evidence-based youth development sex education program in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska that reduces teen pregnancy while boosting academic achievement, extracurricular activities and smarter life decisions.

The coalition is comprised of six Planned Parenthood affiliates, including Portland. It

will focus on areas throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska where teen birth and pregnancy rates are high and health disparities exist.

As part of the Obama administration's new sex education policy, eligibility for the federal support was limited to teen pregnancy prevention programs that have been proven to make a positive effect on sexual

activity, contraceptive use, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy or births.

For hundreds of Portland area young people, that will mean access to Planned Parenthood's Teen Outreach Program, a youth development program aimed at reducing teen pregnancy.

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