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## **New Report Finds California Health and Educational Systems Failing to Reach Disenfranchised Youth on Sexual Health Issues**

***Wide gap exists between the passage of key reproductive and sexual health policies and implementation***

**LOS ANGELES, CA**--- More than six years after California policy makers passed a comprehensive sex education law some schools are still providing outdated, incomplete reproductive health information that shames young people rather than teaches them, according to a new report by California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ). "[\*Young Women Speak Out!\*](#)" provides startling first hand accounts of young Latinas that demonstrate a devastating gap between existing state laws and policies and the haphazard implementation taking place in schools and communities on a wide range of reproductive health concerns.

"State health and educational systems are failing our youth," said Ena Suseth Valladares, senior researcher for [CLRJ](#). "California's families need policies and institutions that address the health, education and opportunities of the most disenfranchised young women and that are held accountable when they fall short."

In a series of research focus groups across key regions of the state, young women reported widespread, systemic obstacles in accessing medically accurate information about their reproductive and sexual health. These barriers include: limited awareness of their legal right to confidential health services, the misuse use of abstinence-only messages in schools, a lack of culturally-relevant health information and tools for parents to use when talking to their children about sexuality issues, and messages from educators and administrators that stigmatize and shame pregnant and parenting youth.

Since 2004, California has banned abstinence-only curricula and has established guidelines for schools that choose to teach sex education, such as providing information on contraception, STD testing and information about confidential reproductive health services. State law also requires that pregnant or parenting youth have access to equal educational opportunities, including the right to remain in the same school and participate in academic programs made available to all other students.

"The haphazard implementation of state policies about sex education and equal education are made even worse by the Governor's current budget proposal, which would further threaten key adolescent health programs that provide vital reproductive health services and promote positive sexual health

outcomes among youth,” said Rocio Córdoba, CLRJ’s Executive Director. “Policy makers shouldn’t balance the budget on the backs of young Latinas, pregnant and parenting youth, and their families.”

The Public Health Institute reports that California youth acquire more than one million new sexually transmitted infection (STI) cases annually. Of these, Latina and other low-income youth of color experience the greatest inequities in access to health care, reflected in staggering reproductive and sexual health disparities.

Please click here for the full [report](#) or the [executive summary](#) and its findings. The report is also available on CLRJ's Web site at <http://www.californialatinas.org/>

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*California Latinas for Reproductive Justice is the leading California-based policy advocacy organization whose mission is to advance California Latinas' reproductive health and rights within a social justice and human rights framework. CLRJ works to ensure that policy developments are reflective of the priority needs of Latinas, their families and their communities.*