# Racy TV, Lack of Sex Ed Blamed for Increased STIs Among Illinois Teens

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Sexualized images in the media and a lack of comprehensive sexual education in the classroom are being blamed for the increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among teens, *The State Journal-Register* reports.

“Popular culture glamorizes sex,” said Charlie Rabins, chief of the STI program at the Illinois Department of Public Health. “There are very few prevention messages.”

Rabins added that Illinois school districts lack funding to expand STI prevention education in Illinois public schools. When sex ed is discussed in the classroom, educators often favor abstinence-only curriculums.

“Abstinence-only is not effective,” he said. “Ultimately, there needs to be a lot more education in the schools.”

According to recent data, new cases of chlamydia in Illinois rose to 59,169 in 2008—the highest number recorded in the state. Gonorrhea cases outside Chicago have been rising during the past few years, with 10,165 cases reported in 2008. Both infections, which were more common among teenagers and young adults, make a person more vulnerable to HIV.

A bill awaiting Governor Pat Quinn’s signature would allow for “expedited partner therapy,” in which health care providers who treat patients with chlamydia or gonorrhea give those patients antibiotics to pass on to their sexual partners. Expedited partner therapy is already permitted in 15 states.

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