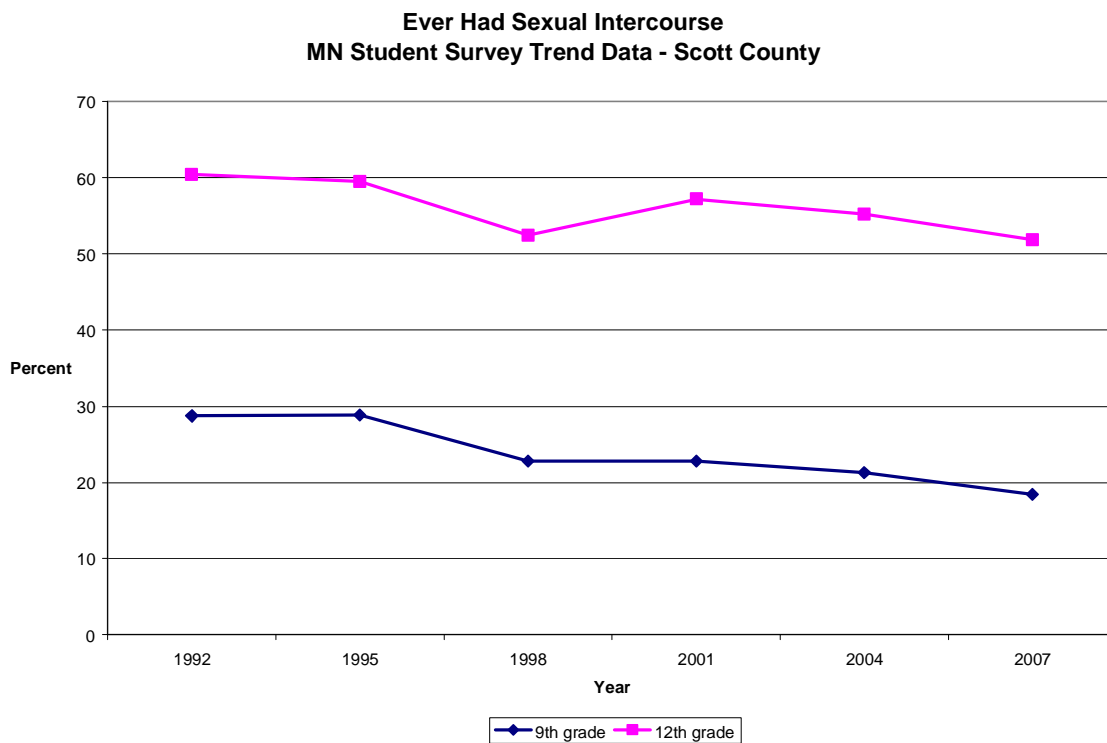


Peers, Schools and Parents – Powerful Communicators on Teen Sexuality

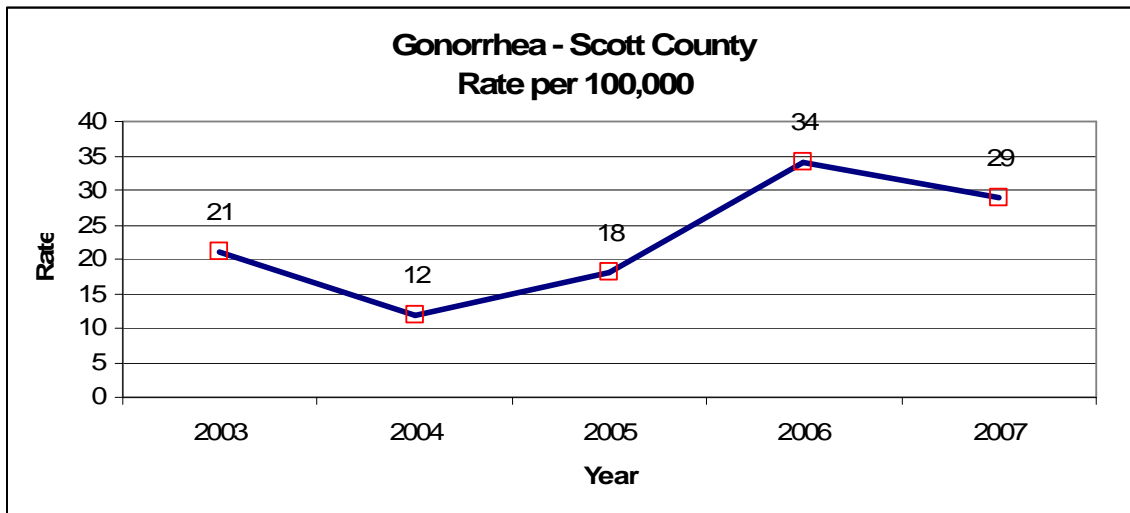
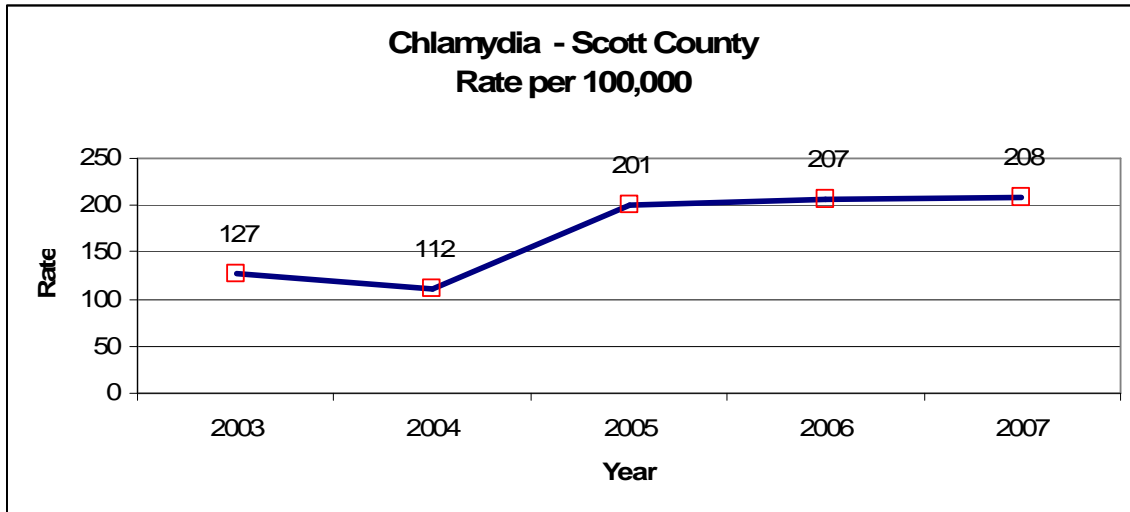
“Where have you received most of your information about sex?” This was the question asked of 9th and 12th graders in Scott County on the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey. 63% of 9th graders and 79% of 12th graders first mentioned friends or peers. Next, they mentioned school, teachers or counselors at 60% and 44% respectively. Thirdly, Scott County students stated that parents (48% & 38% respectively) are also powerful communicators. Note that information from adults is sought out more at the 9th grade level than the 12th graders. This information is extremely important when we consider factors that cause our rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) to rise.

According to same survey, 22% of Scott County students claim to have had sex three or more times, and an additional 10% admit to having had sex once or twice. The following chart describes the trend data since 1992 at the 9th and 12th grade levels for the question “Have you ever had sexual intercourse (had sex)”:



In a report released by the Minnesota Department of Health about Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the state in 2007, it was noted that young adults and adolescents accounted for 68% of the Chlamydia cases and 56% of gonorrhea. Fortunately, in 2007, there were only 15 cases of syphilis reported for suburban metro counties, excluding the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

However, the chlamydia trend in Scott County increased 79% during the year 2004, and has remained stable since that time. Gonorrhea cases have been fewer in quantity, but none the less, increased 183% during the years 2004-06. The charts below provide data on the rate per 100,000 population.



“Routine testing by physicians, even in the absence of symptoms, is the only way to detect these cases.” said Peter Carr, epidemiologist from the Minnesota Department of Health. “About 3 out of 4 females and 1 out of 2 males will show no symptoms once infected.”

Consequences of STDs can be serious if they are left untreated. They can cause permanent damage to reproductive organs, and can lead to infertility in men and women in adulthood. They can also infect newborns, and lead to serious

complications for the infant. STDs can also infect other body parts, and cause heart disease, blindness, arthritis, or brain damage.

Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) call for annual screenings of all sexually active women aged 25 and under and for women over 25 that have risk factors such as a new sexual partner. "Guidelines and screenings are only a part of the solution," says Carr. "A missing piece is that not enough sexual partners of those already diagnosed are being notified about their need to be tested and treated. Untreated partners remain reservoirs for spreading the disease." In the Minnesota Student Survey completed in Scott County in 2007, 49% of the students who claimed to be sexually active *never* discussed STDs or HIV with their sexual partner or partners.

Further information on a wide range of issues related to sexually transmitted diseases can be found at the Minnesota Department of Health website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/stds/index.html>. This would be an excellent place for parents to start in finding accurate information for discussing consequences of early sexual experiences with their children. Included is a section on resources for teachers, and information about notifying your partners if you have been diagnosed with an STD.

For confidential information about the prevention, testing locations and treatment of STDs, call the Minnesota Family Planning & STD Hotline, toll free, at 1-800-78-FACTS (voice or TTY), 651-645-9360 (Twin Cities Metro area).

Data from the most recent Minnesota Student Survey became available several months ago, from the survey that was undertaken in the spring of 2007. Schools were required to notify parents of the survey, of their right to decline their child's participation, and of their right to review the survey. The parents needed to take the initiative to opt their children out of the survey, otherwise the students were automatically in. Four of the 5 districts in Scott County participated in the survey, and had high participation rates as seen in the chart below:

	9 th grade	12 th grade
Belle Plaine School District	87%	74%
Jordan Public School District	80%	74%
Prior Lake – Savage School District	88%	74%
Shakopee School District	88%	66%

For further information, about STDs or the Minnesota Student Survey, residents may call Scott County Public Health at 952-496-8584.