

《西安中学校园开售避孕套惹争议》

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Parents fear that a decision by health authorities in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, allowing middle schools to sell condoms on campus will promote teenage sex. The move has been made to curb an increase in HIV/AIDS cases.

"The decision was made by the provincial government after in-depth research and careful studies," said Ma Guanghui, director of the Shaanxi provincial health and family planning committee's disease control office.

China has seen an increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases among people aged 15 to 24 in recent years.

In 2008, the country reported 482 HIV/AIDS cases involving people in that age group, but the number rose to 1,387 in 2012, according to the National Center for AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease Control and Prevention.

The latest policy has triggered controversy in Xi'an.

A woman in the city surnamed Wu, whose son will enter junior high school in September, said, "It is not suitable to sell condoms in middle schools."

But another Xi'an resident surnamed Xie, whose son is a third grader at a junior high school, supported the measure.

"I think it is necessary to protect students from sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, because sex is not rare among high school students nowadays," Xie said.

Liu Ling, deputy director of Shaanxi provincial health and family planning committee, said AIDS prevention and control work is at a critical stage in the province. Shaanxi has set a target for new HIV infections to fall by 25 percent by the end of 2015, compared with the level in 2010.

Selling condoms in middle schools is part of the effort to achieve this target, Liu added.

AIDS prevention education would also be improved in schools and anti-AIDS courses added to the curriculum, he said.