



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on June 28, 2010

Provincetown Revising Condoms-for-schoolchildren Policy?

The Massachusetts Cape Cod town of Provincetown will take a second look at a policy the school board adopted back in May that would allow children as young as kindergartners to obtain free condoms from a school nurse without notifying the child's parents. The policy was reconsidered after even Massachusetts' liberal Democratic Governor Deval Patrick objected to the policy as too permissive.



"The media's focus," Provincetown Superintendent Beth Singer [protested](#) to the *Cape Cod Times* for June 25, was "a misunderstanding of the policy." But School Committee Chairman Peter Grosso told the *Cape Cod Times* that giving condoms to fifth graders and above and keeping parents ignorant of condom distribution were the keys to the new policy. *Boston Globe* reporter Jack Nicas noted in a June 25 in a [video blog](#):

I spoke with School Committee Chairman Peter Grosso today. He said that although the school committee would revise the policy, he said he would not vote for a policy that makes condoms available only at the high school. The high school serves seventh graders to seniors. The elementary school serves preschoolers to sixth graders. Peter Grosso believes fifth and sixth graders must have condoms available to them because you never know when kids are having sexual activities. Grosso also said that he would not vote for a policy that would allow parents to have their children opt-out of the condom availability. Grosso believes that children should be able to secretly request condoms and also that parents should have no say in the matter.

Grosso [told](#) the *Cape Cod Times*: "They're going to get them [condoms] anyway. This way, maybe it's in a less embarrassing way, and we can offer some kind of counseling to go with it." Students in schools in Massachusetts need parental permission to get a Tylenol, but in Provincetown and several other Massachusetts communities they don't need parental permission — or even notification — to get a condom.

The policy change could include a parental "opt-out" where parents can require that the school not dispense condoms to their children, despite Grosso's opposition. Even the ultra-leftist *Boston Globe* [editorialized](#) in favor of the revised policy, calling parental notification a "sensible compromise" and limiting condom distribution to fifth grade and up. The *Globe* did not fret the possible opt-out provision of the change because "in practice, only a small number of parents end up opting their children out of



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the programs.”

Provincetown is a tourist destination at the tip of Cape Cod that is known more than for its ocean view; it is also a prominent gay tourist destinations. As a result, the policy in many respects reflects the permissive gay culture that permeates the town.

The Provincetown decision set off a firestorm, locally and in the media. A *Cape Cod Times* Internet [poll](#) showed that most residents opposed the policy, 62-37 percent. But *Newsweek* magazine [weighed](#) in favor of the policy, arguing “theoretically, yes, a 6-year-old could walk in and request condoms. The chances of that happening, of course, are slim — but if a 6-year-old were asking about sex, wouldn’t a little counseling from a medical professional be in order?” A better question would have been: Wouldn’t informing the parents be in order?

No, not if you ask Kayla Webley of *Time* magazine, who essentially [argued](#) that parents are impotent buffoons who should be patronizingly ignored by omniscient school officials: “Parents, we all know forbidding teens from doing things doesn’t work, so if your kid is going to get busy in the back of a pick-up truck — regardless of whether they should be or whether you approve — given the choice, wouldn’t you rather they used protection?”

The issue before the nation is who will decide what is appropriate for children, their parents or the government. Governments are increasingly making their decisions, in Massachusetts and across the nation. Will parents demand their rights?



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