



Healthy Teen Network

POSITION STATEMENT ON **SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

Adopted by the Healthy Teen Network Board of Directors on June 4, 2016



Position

Healthy Teen Network believes that all young people should receive, with unfettered access, comprehensive sexuality education. We consider sexuality education to be comprehensive when it 1) imparts that all consensual sexual activities are fundamentally healthy; 2) addresses individual values and group norms that support health-promoting behaviors; 3) focuses on reinforcing protective factors, as well as increasing personal perceptions of risk and harmfulness of engaging in specific health risk behaviors; 4) addresses social pressures and influences; 5) builds personal and social competence; 6) provides functional knowledge that is basic, accurate, and directly contributes to health-promoting decisions and behaviors; 7) uses strategies designed to personalize information and engage students; 8) provides age- and developmentally-appropriate information, learning strategies, teaching methods and materials; 9) incorporates learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials that are culturally inclusive; 10) provides adequate time for instruction and learning; 11) provides opportunities to reinforce skills and positive health behaviors; 12) provides opportunities to make connections with other influential persons; and 13) includes teacher information and plans for professional development and training to enhance effectiveness of instruction and student learning¹.

¹ Future of Sex Education Initiative. (2012). National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 [a special publication of the Journal of School Health]. Retrieved from <http://www.futureofsexeducation.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf>.

Sexuality education curricula delivered to all people should be based in scientific theory and supported by an evidence base of effectiveness.

Sexuality education should be integrated into all educational levels and programs and across the academic curriculum.

Issue

Not all youth in the United States receive comprehensive sexuality education. While all states expect their public schools to provide sexuality education², the content, duration, and intensity of such education varies. Some states, school districts, and schools give parents the choice to remove their children from sexuality education. Furthermore, some youth educated outside of public systems or disconnected from school may have limited or essentially no sexuality education. Failure to provide all children and youth with comprehensive sexuality education raises serious public health concerns and impairs the full positive development of youth.

Supporting Information

Sexuality education is a subset of health education. Comprehensive sexuality education provides young people with the tools to make informed decisions and build healthy relationships; stresses the value of abstinence while also preparing young people for when they become sexually active; provides medically accurate information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives, including condoms, as a means to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of contracting STIs and HIV/AIDS; encourages family communication about sexuality between parent and child; teaches young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality, including how to avoid unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances; and teaches young people how alcohol and drug use can effect responsible decision making.³

Comprehensive sexuality education is important to health promotion and disease prevention as it contributes to reductions in rates of [maternal mortality](#), [abortion](#), adolescent pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS.⁴

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² National Conference of State Legislatures. (2015). State Policies on Sex Education in Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-policies-on-sex-education-in-schools.aspx>

³ Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. (2009). What the Research Says...Comprehensive Sex Education. Retrieved January 28, 2016 from <http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=1193>

⁴ Center for Reproductive Rights. (2010). Adolescents' Access to Reproductive Health Services and Information Retrieved January 28, 2016 from <http://www.reproductiverights.org/project/adolescents-access-to-reproductive-health-services-and-information>