

## Why Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education?

### Comprehensive Sexuality Education:

Teaches that abstinence is the best method for avoiding sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy, but also teaches about condom use and contraceptive methods to reduce the risk of STI and unintended pregnancy. It covers a broad range of issues relating to both the physical and biological aspects of sexuality, and the emotional and social aspects of sexuality. It can support the efforts of parents and teachers to provide honest, accurate, and affirming information to young people about sexuality, and help diminish the impact of some of the negative or inaccurate sexual messages and stereotypes often found in the media and sometimes supported by their peers. Furthermore, such programs empower youth to make responsible choices that protect their health, well-being and provide support for academic achievement.

- A recent examination of the National Survey of Family Growth to determine the impact of sexuality education on sexual risk-taking for young people ages 15-19, revealed that teens who received comprehensive sexuality education were 50% **less likely** to report a pregnancy than those who received abstinence-only education. (Kohler, et al. *Abstinence-only and Comprehensive Sex Education and the Initiation of Sexual Activity and Teen Pregnancy*. Journal of Adolescent Health, 42 (4): 344-351)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognize that “health-risk behaviors such as early sexual initiation, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to poor grades and test scores and lower educational attainment”, and that “school health programs can have positive effects on educational outcomes, as well as health-risk behaviors and health outcomes.” (CDC (2010) [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/index](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/index).)
- Evaluations of comprehensive sex education programs show that these programs can help youth delay the onset of sexual activity reduce the number of sexual partners, and increase condom and contraceptive use. (Advocates for Youth August 2010 *Comprehensive Sex Education and Academic Success-Effective Programs Foster Student Achievement*)

### New National Standards Offer Guidance to Schools

The *National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12*, published in the Journal of School Health in January 2012, are the result of a cooperative effort by the American Association of Health Education, the American School Health Association, the National Education Association Health Information Network, and the Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education, in coordination with the Future of Sex Education (FoSE) Initiative. The goal of the standards is to provide “clear, consistent, and straightforward guidance to the *essential minimum, core content* for sexuality education that is developmentally and age appropriate for students in K-12.” There are seven topics included as the minimum, essential content and skills for K-12 sexuality education:

- Anatomy and Physiology (*AP*) provides a foundation for understanding basic human functioning.
- Puberty and Adolescent Development (*PD*) addresses a pivotal milestone for every person that has an impact on physical, social and emotional development.
- Identity (*ID*) addresses several fundamental aspects of people’s understanding of who they are.
- Pregnancy and Reproduction (*PR*) addresses information about how pregnancy happens and decision-making to avoid a pregnancy.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV (*SH*) provides both content and skills for understanding and avoiding STDs and HIV, including how they are transmitted, their signs and symptoms and testing and treatment.
- Healthy Relationships (*HR*) offers guidance to students on how to successfully navigate changing relationships among family, peers and partners. Special emphasis is

given in the *National Sexuality Education Standards* to the increasing use and impact of technology within relationships.

- Personal Safety (PS) emphasizes the need for a growing awareness, creation and maintenance of safe school environments for all students.

### Arizona Youth Need Comprehensive Sex Education

Results from the *2011 Arizona Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Results*, indicate that youth need schools supportive of comprehensive sexuality education.

- Forty-seven percent have had intercourse at some point in their lives
- Fifty-two percent (52.6%) of high school seniors reported having sexual intercourse in the past three months.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) report using a condom during last sexual intercourse
- Fifteen percent (15%) did not use any method to prevent pregnancy during last intercourse.
- By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 24.2% of student reported having four or more sexual partners during their lifetime.
- By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 65% of high school seniors reported having sexual intercourse.
- Of students who report having sexual intercourse, 22.4% report drinking alcohol or using drugs before sexual intercourse.
- Ten percent of students report being “physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.”
- Eleven percent of students report being “hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend (during the 12 months before the survey.”

The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) provides data on reproductive health for Arizona youth and compares it to the national average for the United States. According to this data-

- In 2010, Arizona ranked 13 out of 51 states on teen birth rates among mother ages 15-19 (with 1 representing the lowest rate and 50 representing the highest rate). Arizona was ranked as having the 4<sup>th</sup> highest teen pregnancy rate.
- Hispanic teens make up a disproportionate number of births to teens, especially when compared with the national average. In Arizona, 58% of births are to Hispanic teens, while the national average for Hispanic teens is 33%.
- While the teen pregnancy rate has declined dramatically since 1988, both in Arizona and nationally, Arizona still has a much higher rate than the national average, with a rate of 89 compared to a rate of 70 for the United States.

The Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) *2009 National School Climate Survey* for Arizona demonstrate that Arizona schools were not safe for many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) secondary school students. In addition, many LGBT students in Arizona did not have access to important school resources, such as Gay-Straight Alliances, and were not protected by comprehensive bullying/harassment school policies.

### Arizona Parents Support Medically Accurate Sex Education

Planned Parenthood Arizona commissioned a study to update previous public opinion studies conducted by the former Planned Parenthood of Central and Northern Arizona and Planned Parenthood of Southern Arizona. The study was completed by Behavior Research Center (BRC) in May of 2008. Results indicate

- That 76% of Arizonans believe that the best way to reduce teen pregnancy is through medically accurate sex education, including birth control education.
- That 80% of Arizonans believe that parents and teachers who are trained in the subject should both play major roles in teaching sex education in the home and in schools.
- That 65% of Arizonans believe that teen pregnancies **cannot** be significantly reduced through in-school programs that promote only abstinence, i.e. programs that exclude accurate education about birth control options.
- A similar survey, conducted in 2011 by BRC indicates that Arizonans were 67% more likely to support Planned Parenthood because we offer medically accurate sex education to teens, an increase of 34%.

### Arizona Law Gives School Districts Flexibility in Providing Sexuality Education

Requirements for sexual health education are outlined in the Administrative Code R7-2-303. The State Board of Education has determined that sexual health education materials used in public schools in Arizona need to

- Clearly state that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only method for avoiding pregnancy that is 100% effective, and stress that students should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are mature adults.
- R7-2-303 also requires that sex education materials and instruction that is provided “meet the needs of the district” and a district may decide that students need this information (often based on data such as teen pregnancy/birth rates).

The decision to offer sex education is made by local governing boards in Arizona, and other than the specifics that are addressed in this Administrative Code, the content of the instruction is determined by local governing boards as well. This would include whether or not districts want to provide students with information about contraceptives or condoms.

### [Affordable Resources for Comprehensive Sexuality Education are Available](#)

Family Life and Sexual Health (FLASH) is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum that spans from 4<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades. Developed by the by Public Health-Seattle & King County, the curriculum has been adopted and widely used by school districts in Washington, Idaho, and throughout the United States and Canada. The curriculum has been continuously updated since 2002 to reflect advances in medicine and cultural changes. The High School Flash -2<sup>nd</sup> Edition was released in 2011, and updates were made to 7/8 and the 4, 5, 6 curricula, in 2009. *All About Life: Grades K-4 Caring About Myself, My Family, and My Community* is also available from the Public Health-Seattle & King County.

The curriculum aligns with the current *National Health Education Standards*, and the recently released *National Sexuality Education Standards K-12*. The FLASH curriculum, like most of the sexual health curricula that have been proven effective, is grounded in Social Learning Theory. Resting on a foundation of positive and healthy sexuality across the lifespan, the curriculum addresses such issues as physical development, promotion of sexual health, body image, interpersonal relationships, personal safety, and gender roles in a developmentally and age-appropriate context. It focuses on the needs of public schools and diverse communities in a number of unique ways.

- Reasonably Priced -Bound copies of the curriculum can be purchased for \$55-\$60, or it can be downloaded for free at [www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash).
- A Special Education edition is available for use with students ages 11-21.
- Training for Teachers and Staff - Planned Parenthood Arizona can provide training and technical assistance on the curriculum. Contact Vicki Hadd-Wissler at [vhadd-wissler@ppaz.org](mailto:vhadd-wissler@ppaz.org) for more information.