



WHY WE NEED BETTER SEX ED: TALKING POINTS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR POLICYMAKER

The Problem: Young people do NOT get the sex ed they deserve and have a right to—especially when it comes to consent and sexual assault.

- We are failing our nation's youth by not providing them with the information, education, and skills they need—and have the right to learn—to lead healthy lives.
- Between 2006 and 2013, the amount of young people receiving formal sexuality education decreased.
- Less than 50% of high schools and 20% of middle schools across the country provide instruction on all of CDC's 16 minimum sexual health topics (CDC).
- Most people report that they never learned about consent, sexual assault, or healthy relationships in middle school or high school.
- An overwhelming majority of people believe that middle school sexuality education should include education focused on consent and sexual assault including:
 - how to ask for consent (**75%**),
 - how to give consent (**74%**),
 - how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (**91%**), and
 - support services if you have been sexually assaulted (**96%**).
- When asked, most people report that their parents did not talk with them about
 - how to ask for consent (**81%**),
 - how to give consent (**78%**),
 - how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (**77%**), or
 - support services if you have been sexually assaulted (**78%**).
- Only **one** state (California) requires student instruction on consent, or the affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity.
- **Zero** states require student instruction in human trafficking.
- Only **four** states require health education instruction to affirmatively recognize different Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) or affirm the dignity and worth of all people, regardless of SOGIE.
- Only **two** states require student instruction on sex trafficking.
- We have a responsibility to support the rights and lifelong health of our nation's youth. Whether sexually active—**58 percent** of high school students report having had sex by the time they are in 12th grade— or not the sexuality education young people receive, or don't receive, creates a foundation for their sexual health throughout their lives.



SIECUS

Sexuality Information and Education
Council of the United States

- We know part of the solution: decades of research show that sexuality education helps students learn to make healthy decisions about their sexual health, behaviors, personal skills, and communication.
- Most people believe that too little is being done to educate about sexual assault in schools (61-63 percent).

The Solution: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- Comprehensive sexuality education in school settings:
 - starts in kindergarten and continues sequentially through 12th grade,
 - is age- and developmentally appropriate, science-based, and contains medically accurate information on a broad set of topics related to sexuality including human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviors including abstinence, sexual health, society and culture, and media literacy, and
 - provides students with opportunities for learning information, exploring their attitudes and values, and developing skills.
- Comprehensive sexuality education has a proven track record of helping young people to establish healthy relationships and make healthy decisions for themselves.
- The vast majority of Americans believe sexuality education is important and that it should be taught in middle and high school and include a wide range of topics.
- Sexuality education includes learning about sexual health and behaviors and how our bodies work, how they need to be cared for, and how they reflect who we are.
- Sexuality education is about much more than sex. It also includes learning about how to communicate with and relate to others, understanding how people interact in healthy and unhealthy ways, and learning to be clear about one's own and respecting others' boundaries.
- To ensure the human rights and lifelong health of our nation's young people, we must end funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs disguised as "sexual risk avoidance education" and support science-based, age- and developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, medically accurate, LGBTQ-inclusive, and culturally proficient sexuality education.
- Components of comprehensive sexuality education have been shown to improve academic success; prevent child sexual abuse, dating violence, and bullying; help youth develop healthier relationships; delay sexual initiation; reduce unintended pregnancy and HIV and other STIs; and reduce sexual health disparities among LGBTQ youth.

*For additional information, including citations for the above data, please contact The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS) by calling **(202) 265-2405** or emailing **info@siecus.org**.*