



Qualifications of Teachers of Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Education

Since 1977, state legislation has required that those who teach sexuality education must be "qualified to teach health" (*Section 380.1507.5 of the Revised School Code.*) Until 1996, the legislation gave the State Board of Education the power to qualify a teacher to teach sex education through an approved 20-clock-hour training. However, this provision was removed in 1996. At that time, the Michigan Department of Education offered, in error, an informal interpretation that local districts could determine teacher qualifications to teach sexuality education. However, legislation actually provides the authority to determine teaching qualifications to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (*Section 380.1531 of the Revised School Code.*)

This document: 1) clarifies the difference between sexuality education and HIV/AIDS education, 2) clarifies the qualifications to teach sexuality and HIV/AIDS education in light of teacher certification regulations, and 3) makes related recommendations.

The State Board of Education adopted the *Policy to Promote Health and Prevent Disease and Pregnancy* in September 2003. This document builds on the recommendations of that policy that local districts: 1) plan, adopt, and implement sexuality education programs that are research based and consistent with the principles of effective instruction; and 2) support on-going professional development in effective sexuality instruction.

Definition of Sexuality Education

In order to clarify the qualifications to teach sexuality education, it is necessary to define sexuality education. The purpose of human sexuality education is to protect and promote health and to provide skills needed for caring, safe, and responsible relationships¹. Sound programs of instruction address human development, healthy relationships, possible consequences of sexual risk behaviors, influence of alcohol and other drugs on decisions, and sexuality within society and culture. Instruction should emphasize that students have the power to control personal behavior and should base their actions on reasoning, a sense of responsibility, and respect for self and others². Students develop important interpersonal skills such as communication skills, limit-setting, assertiveness, and peer refusal.³ Education programs should address the needs of all students--those who abstain from sexual activity, those who have engaged in sexual activity but are currently abstaining, and those who may currently be engaging in sexual behaviors. Programs should be developmentally, linguistically, culturally, and age-appropriate and of sufficient

¹ Adapted from *Education for Sexuality and HIV/AIDS*, Meeks, Heit and Burt, 1993

² State Board of Education *Policy to Promote Health and Prevent Disease and Pregnancy*, September 2003

³ Adapted from *Guidelines for Sexual Health Information and Disease Prevention*, Washington State Department of Health and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, January 2005

duration for students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to adopt healthy behaviors.⁴

Definition of HIV/AIDS Instruction

Legislatively mandated HIV/AIDS instruction is more narrowly focused than sexuality education. Schools are required by Michigan law to provide instruction that focuses on the principal modes by which dangerous communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, HIV/AIDS, are spread and the best methods for the restriction and prevention of these diseases (*Section 380.1169.1 of the Revised School Code*). In addition to this content, the Michigan Department of Education recommends, but does not require, the following content:

- Universal precautions for avoiding the spread of blood borne pathogens;
- Current statistics regarding prevalence of HIV and/or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs);
- How the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) affects the body and immune system;
- Current testing and treatment options for HIV and/or other STIs; and
- Importance of treating people living with HIV or AIDS with compassion.

Qualifications for Teachers of Sexuality Education

In order to teach sexuality education, teachers must be “qualified to teach health” (*Section 380.1507.5 of the Revised School Code*). The endorsements which qualify teachers to teach health, thus qualifying them to teach sexuality education as defined above, include the *MA* (health), *MX* (health, physical education, recreation and dance combined), or *KH* (family and consumer science) endorsements. This requirement applies to all middle school and high school teachers who teach sexuality education under a secondary teaching certificate.

The Michigan Department of Education clarifies this requirement as it pertains to the following teachers:

- Biology or life science teachers continue to be qualified by their endorsements to teach those aspects of reproductive health that are detailed in the K-12 Science Standards. *Local education agencies may define these classes as sexuality education classes for the purpose of review by the Sex Education Advisory Board, as detailed in Section 380.1507 of the Revised School Code.*
- Special education teachers who teach sexuality education in self-contained settings are qualified on the successful completion of in-service training in sexuality education that is relevant to the developmental needs of their students.
- Teachers who are currently teaching sexuality education, as defined above, but who do not have an appropriate endorsement, may be eligible for a permit to teach sexuality education under certain conditions as contained in the *Administrative Rules Governing the Certification of Michigan Teachers*.

⁴ State Board of Education *Policy to Promote Health and Prevent Disease and Pregnancy*, September 2003. Dr. Douglas Kirby in *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy* (2001) identified the most effective school-based programs as those that lasted 14 or more hours.

- These qualifications apply to the teacher of record who has been assigned to implement this component of the district curriculum. The qualifications do not apply to guest speakers, since the teacher of record is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the content is consistent with state laws and district policies.

Qualifications for Persons Providing HIV/AIDS Instruction

The Michigan Department of Education clarifies the qualifications of a person who may provide HIV/AIDS instruction as defined above:

- Consistent with the state law that mandates HIV/AIDS instruction (*Section 380.1169 of the Revised School Code*), any certified teacher shall be qualified to provide such instruction upon the successful completion of an in-service program provided by designated regional School Health Coordinators, and approved by the Michigan Department of Education.
- Apart from certified teachers, *Section 1169(2)* also allows licensed health care professionals who have training in HIV/AIDS to provide this instruction.
- On the basis of best practice, it is recommended, but not required, that HIV/AIDS instruction at the secondary level be offered in the context of sexuality education by a health education teacher.

In-service Training for Teachers of Sexuality Education

Sexuality education programs are regulated by state laws and local policies, and are a focus of community interest. **The Michigan Department of Education therefore recommends that teachers of sexuality education receive a minimum of six-clock-hours of professional development in sexuality education content, teaching methods, and Michigan laws at least once every five years.** For more information about in-service training programs, contact your regional School Health Coordinator or Laurie Bechhofer, Coordinated School Health and Safety Programs, via email at BechhoferL@michigan.gov or by phone at 517-335-7252.

Alternative Preparation/Endorsement Options for Teachers Needing Endorsements

The Michigan Department of Education is aware that some teachers without the appropriate endorsement may be currently assigned to teach health or sexuality education. Several approved teacher preparation programs are ready to provide a special, time-limited option to assist experienced teachers in earning an appropriate endorsement. This option will allow certified teachers who have endorsements in other areas to receive credit for health teaching experience and in-service training received through the regional School Health Coordinators.

This special option will be available through **June 30, 2010**, for those teachers who:

1. hold a Michigan teacher certification;
2. have taught health education and/or sexuality education classes in the district before January 1, 2007; and

3. have received approved in-service training in health education and/or sexuality education before June 30, 2007.

For more information about these options, contact Mary Teachout, Coordinated School Health and Safety Programs, via email at teachoutm@michigan.gov or by phone at 517-335-1730.

Permits to Teach Without the Required Endorsement

The Professional Preparation Services office at the Michigan Department of Education accepts applications from districts for full-year permits that allow certified teachers to teach without the required endorsement, while pursuing coursework toward earning the endorsement. The full year permit is only issued for an assignment that extends for a semester or more. The district will be required to post and advertise the position prior to making an application for the permit. Applications can be renewed for up to three years. For more information about full-year permits, contact the Office of Professional Preparation Services at 517-373-3310.

Consequences Related to All Endorsements (including Health Education Endorsements)

State legislation identifies serious consequences for continuing to employ teachers without the proper credentials.

- Section 388.1763 of the *Revised School Code* states the penalty of deduction from state aid funding for a district that employs a nonapproved, noncertificated teacher. See <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-388-1763.pdf>.