

SEX EDUCATION

The Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH) urges parents, caregivers, community members, and other decision makers to support medically accurate, research-informed, developmentally-appropriate, non-shaming, trauma-informed, inclusive, and affirming sexual health education in line with emerging best practices (i.e., comprehensive sex ed). This document provides guidance on how to promote access to high quality sex education in your own community and across Michigan.

Understand what comprehensive sex education is, and how it is more effective and supportive than abstinence-only until marriage education.

- Comprehensive sex ed gives young people tools to understand who they are, their changing bodies, and how to care for them. Students learn about topics such as: healthy relationships, consent, sexual and gender identity, pleasure, decision making, puberty, reproductive systems, contraception, pregnancy, STIs, and abstinence.
- This health education starts at birth and is a lifelong learning process that respects cultural norms, values, and beliefs.
- Compared to young people who receive abstinence-only education, young people who receive comprehensive sexual health education are more likely to delay when they first have sex, have protected sex, and protect themselves from STIs, unintended pregnancy, and other adverse health outcomes.¹

¹ American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. (2016). Comprehensive sexuality education. Committee Opinion No. 678. *Obstet Gynecol*, 128:e227–30.

- > Comprehensive sex ed is effective not only for prevention of pregnancy and STI infection, but also for development of healthy relationships, appreciation of sexual diversity, development of media literacy and social-emotional learning, and prevention of child sex abuse and dating and intimate partner violence.²

Support the majority of parents and caregivers who want schools to teach comprehensive sex ed, and follow the recommendations of reproductive and sexual health experts.

- > Parents and caregivers are essential in providing education and guidance around their child's sexual and reproductive health. Teaching sex ed in schools is an additional resource and support for parents. A study on parents' views on sex ed showed that 89% of parents across the political spectrum want their children to receive comprehensive sex ed in schools.³
- > Not all parents and caregivers are comfortable or able to have these necessary conversations with their children.⁴ Teaching comprehensive sex ed in schools supports parents in these conversations and ensures all young people get the information they need.
- > Follow the recommendations of expert organizations in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health – all of which recommend schools teach comprehensive sex education to young people of all ages. These organizations include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Psychological Association, American Public Health Association, and National Academy of Medicine.

Get involved with your local sex education advisory board (SEAB).

- > Consider joining or supporting your local sex education advisory board (SEAB) in choosing, reviewing, and approving sex ed curricula that best responds to the needs of young people in your community.

2 Goldfarb, E. S., & Lieberman, L. D. (2020). Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 68*(1), 13–27. doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.036.

3 Kantor, L., & Levitz, N. (2017). Parents' views on sex education in schools: How much do Democrats and Republicans agree?. *PLoS one, 12*(7), e0180250. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0180250.

4 Flores, D., & Barroso, J. (2017). 21st Century Parent-Child Sex Communication in the United States: A Process Review. *Journal of Sex Research, 54*(4-5), 532–548.

- > SEABs have a lot of influence over sex ed curricula in local districts. They set the local sex ed program goals and objectives, review and recommend curriculum, and evaluate and report on goals for the school district's student population.⁵
- > SEABs are a critical local force. Composed of community members and parents of students, they are a bridge between parents and the school board.

Support current legislation that would advance and improve comprehensive sex ed offerings across the state.

- > Contact your elected officials to voice your support for progressive bills to become law, and to oppose regressive bills.
- > Advocate for other policy changes that would mandate sex ed and expand sex ed curricula to include information about other topics such as sexuality, gender identity, and healthy relationships.

MOASH remains committed to advancing comprehensive sexual education and uplifting youths' voices and sexual and reproductive health needs. We urge you to do the same.

⁵ Current Revised School Code (PA 451 of 1976) § 380.1507. (2004).