



COVID-19 ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES

We at the Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH) recognize that COVID-19 has led to an unforeseen, unprecedented health crisis throughout our state and nation. Keeping in mind the challenges it brings, we must also affirm our commitment to youth - in particular, their physical and mental wellbeing. The following is a list of guiding principles we encourage all policymakers—federal, state, and local—to follow during these times:

- Keep youth impact in mind as you make decisions (and get their input when you can!).
 - This includes (but is not limited to) ensuring continued access to birth control for young people, allowing judicial bypass to remain an essential court function, and funding the work of shelters that work with young people, in particular LGBTQIA+ youth.
 - We encourage colleges and universities to continue to allow students in need to remain on campus, as they may otherwise be returning to unsafe homes.
 - Organizations, especially local public health agencies, should publish resources specifically for youth and teens. These should be written with developmentally-appropriate content that allow young people to understand the situation without instilling undue fear.
 - Young people—in particular college students aged 18-21—should be eligible for any individual payment made by the government, regardless of their 2018 dependency status. Youth at this stage in life have often become financially independent from their parents; many are service industry workers whose jobs are directly impacted by the pandemic and, as such, will be highly in need of these funds.
- Make decisions regarding the 2019-2020/2020-2021 school years consistent across districts (and states, where possible).
 - We understand that the ongoing suspension of in-person classes impacts students across the state in a disparate manner, and we encourage educators to provide both digital and analog ways to learn at home— there are [guides available](#) for teaching health and sex education outside the classroom, and these should be widely distributed alongside other educational materials.
 - We recognize that learning at home is a new, learned skill for students, and no district should punish students, parents, or teachers unable to maintain “business as usual” while making this transition.
 - A student’s educational outcome should be determined neither by their socioeconomic status nor the school they attend, and policies regarding the promotion or retention of students next school year should reflect this (i.e., it should not be the case that only districts who had the resources to transition to online classrooms are able to promote students to the next grade level).*
 - We encourage education officials to make a decision about the future and classification of this school year as soon as possible, so the community can begin curricular preparations for the fall that include agreed-upon remediations for the information missed this semester.*

- Third-grade reading retention and other testing-based accountability should be suspended for both this and next year, as the fall will certainly involve teaching both information from spring 2020 and bringing youth who will have been out of the classroom for over five months back into the rhythm of school.*
- *Note: We are grateful for Governor Whitmer's guidance to this point on the subject and will continue to monitor the state of education throughout the crisis.
- Ensure balance between non-COVID-19 patient safety and wellbeing
 - We encourage physicians, especially OB-GYNs and pediatricians, to maintain regular check-ins with your patients and continue services to the extent safe and possible. In particular, we endorse the expansion of telemedicine and expanding prescriptions to 90-day supplies (at an equivalent copay of 30-days) to minimize vulnerable patient trips to the pharmacy or doctor's office while recognizing new or ongoing financial hardships. Sliding fee scales (beginning at \$0) should be implemented to ensure no one goes without care.
 - While maintaining stringent health screenings, MOASH supports the continued allowance of at minimum one support person into birthing rooms with new parents. Where possible, patients should not have to make the choice between a doula and a partner or other non-medical support person.
- Continue to follow the advice of epidemiologists and other public health experts.
 - This includes, but is not limited to, ongoing [stay-at-home](#) and other [personal safety](#) efforts.
 - It also includes recommendations from organizations such as the [American Council of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) that abortion procedures retain their designation as non-elective and are neither canceled nor rescheduled as they are time-sensitive, critical procedures.
 - We also support the continued expansion of paid sick leave, unemployment, and small business support, as well as ongoing direct payments to all people for the duration of this crisis. Mortgages, rent, student loans, water shutoffs, foreclosures, and evictions should all be suspended at this time. These policies are critical to allowing families to continue to adequately care for their youth and for youth to remain safe and healthy. If water has been shut off at a residence, it should be restored as quickly as possible.
- Make sure new policies are germane to the current pandemic.
 - For example, *do* implement policies enforcing social distancing and telework. *Do not* utilize this crisis to further a non-COVID-19 agenda, such as impeding a person's legal right to an abortion.
- Communicate clearly and often with the public.
 - We are grateful to Governor Whitmer for her early leadership and consistent communication on the topic of COVID-19, and we encourage all policymakers to provide ample information with clear, easy-to-follow guidelines on all available platforms. We encourage the use of both digital and mailed communication to ensure all people have access to this critical information.