

CONDOM AVAILABILITY PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

The Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH) urges community leaders, decision-makers, and legislators to advocate for safe, reliable access to condoms for youth. In Michigan, no person can make any contraception, including condoms, available to students on public school grounds.¹ We urge you to advocate for amending the law to remove this ban on condom availability programs (CAPs) and condom distribution programs (CDPs). This document provides information on the importance of youth access to contraception in learning environments across Michigan.

CAPs and CDPs are two different, but related programs. CAPs involve school staff making condoms available free of charge in places like a nurse's office, school-based health center, designated classroom, or special vending machine. CDPs involve school staff, like school nurses, giving out condoms to students.

Recognize that CAPs and CDPs empower youth with knowledge and tools to protect and promote their health and well-being. Schools are a crucial point of intervention as they address access barriers and provide health education.



Medically accurate, evidence-based, age-appropriate, and comprehensive sexual health education and resources empower young people to make well-informed decisions for their health. With correct and consistent use, condoms are highly effective in preventing unintended pregnancy and STIs.²

¹ Revised School Code, 1976 PA 451, MCL § 380.1507.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). Condoms and STDs: Fact Sheet for Public Health Personnel. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

- > Schools play an important role in students' access to healthcare, and have a stake in the sexual health of their students. There is a strong link between students' health statuses and educational outcomes.³

Understand that amongst youth who are waiting to have sex, CAPs and CDPs don't encourage sexual behavior; they simply ensure that youth who are already having sex or have already decided to have sex in the near future are doing so safely.

- > Often, parents' chief concern with CAPs is that increasing condom availability “encourages” young people to engage in sexual activity.⁴In a systematic review of multiple studies, researchers found that condom availability and distribution does not increase sexual activity among students and instead makes young people safer.⁵
- > CAPs and CDPs combat barriers youth face to condom access. Although minors can legally purchase condoms, young people experience obstacles like cost, fear of stigma, lack of transportation, and lack of information.⁶

Remember that condom use amongst Michigan youth is going down; Michigan youth are thus at higher risk of infection with HIV and other STIs.

- > According to the 2019 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 35% of high school students have engaged in sexual intercourse, and 45.2% of those who are sexually active did not use a condom during last sexual intercourse.⁷Because condoms are the only contraceptive that help prevent the spread of STIs, decreased condom use leaves young people in Michigan less protected against STIs.⁸In the United States, Black and Hispanic students had higher rates of condom and contraception non-use than white students because of more structural barriers to access rooted in systemic racism and classism.¹⁰

3 Sorace, D. (2013). *Addressing Sexual Health in Schools: Policy Considerations*. *Advocates for Youth*.

4 Weiss-Tisman, H. (2020). *Vermont First State Requiring Secondary Schools To Give Out Free Condoms*. *Vermont Public Radio*.

5 Algur, E., Wang, E., Friedman, H. S., & Deperthes, B. (2019). *A Systematic Global Review of Condom Availability Programs in High Schools*. *The Journal of adolescent health: official publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 64(3), 292–304.

6 TeenSource. (2020). *About CAP*. *TeenSource.org*

7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Michigan, High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019*. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Condom and Contraceptive Use Among Sexually Active High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019*. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

9 Kirby, D. B., & Brown, N. L. (1996). *Condom Availability Programs in U.S. Schools. Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *Guttmacher Institute*, 28(5).

Rest assured that experts agree that CAPs and CDPs make youth safer and are best practice.

- > Professional healthcare associations like the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American School Health Association, and the National Medical Association recommend that condoms be made available as part of best practice comprehensive school health programs.

As a parent or caregiver, remember that you are still able to educate and guide your children around their sexual and reproductive health and activity as you see fit.

- > Parents and caregivers have an invaluable role in promoting their children's sexual and reproductive health. We hope families have open, honest, research-informed, and medically-accurate conversations with their children about sexual health. CAPs are an additional "tool kit" for parents and students to access as they see fit. Students can choose to participate or not participate in CAPs. They can always choose not to access condoms.

MOASH remains committed to advocating for improved contraception access for youth and educating schools, families, and community members on the importance and effectiveness of these programs. We urge you to do the same.