



Improving Public Health and Comprehensive Sex Education

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Scope of the Problem

Alaska has some of the country's highest rates of sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and unintended pregnancy.



Public Health Crisis

Alaska has extremely high rates of STIs, ranking highest in the nation for chlamydia and second highest for gonorrhea. ^{iv}

Alaska youth (ages 15-19) are particularly vulnerable – contracting chlamydia at a rate more than 3x the state average. ⁱⁱ



Scope of the Problem

Syphilis Outbreak: During 2018, there was a 293% increase over 2017 for reported syphilis cases. ^{xi}



Scope of the Problem

Alaska's rate of teen pregnancy is above the national average. ^{vi}

Nearly 48% of all pregnancies in Alaska are unintended. ^{ix}



Scope of the Problem

Sexual Violence

Alaska has the highest rate of reported rape in the country – almost 3 times the national average. ⁱⁱ

13.7% of people in Alaska have experienced some form of childhood sexual abuse, estimated to be the highest in the country. ⁱⁱ

Scope of the Problem

UAA's Alaska Victimization Survey ^{vii}

Out of every 100 adult women who reside in the State of Alaska:

Out of every 100 adult women who reside in the State of Alaska:

40 experienced intimate partner violence (IPV):



33 experienced sexual violence:



50 experienced intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or both:



These lifetime estimates come from a 2015 survey of adult women in the State of Alaska.
Source: UAA Justice Center, Alaska Victimization Survey, <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/avs>.



Scope of the Problem

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ youth:

Compared to students in schools without an LGBTQ - inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ students in schools with inclusive curriculum were...

- More likely to feel safe because of their sexual orientation and gender expression ^{xiii}
- Experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression ^{xiii}



Primary Prevention and Behavior Change



Prevention

Health Promotion

“Empowering people to increase control over their health and its determinants through health literacy efforts and multisectoral action to increase healthy behaviors.”¹



Behavior Change

“Long term changes in health behavior involve multiple actions and adaptations over time.”^x

Behavior change often takes time and multiple opportunities.



Abstinence – Only Programs

Are not effective in delaying initiation of sexual intercourse or changing other health behaviors associated with reducing unintended pregnancy and STIs. ^{xii}

May have negative impact on several groups of young people, including LGBTQ youth, sexually active youth, youth with history of sexual abuse, and parenting teens. ^{xii}



Abstinence – Only Programs

Considerable research, including from the CDC, finds that abstinence only education withholds critical information from young people, leaving them at risk. ^{xii}



Comprehensive Sex Education

Young people have the right to information and skills they need to protect their health.



Sex Education should...

Cover a wide range of topics including:

- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Decision-making and peer pressure
- Abstinence
- Communication
- Consent
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Body image
- Media literacy and critical thinking
- Birth control
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



Sex Education should...

- Be culturally specific and taught each school year by a trained educator
- Equip young people with skills they need for a lifetime of good health
- Inclusive of LGBTQ+ population



Positive Health Outcomes

Comprehensive Sex Ed:

- Reduces unprotected sex ^v
- Delays initiation of sex ^v
- Increases condom and contraception use ^v
- Reduces likelihood of unintended pregnancy ^v



Comprehensive Sex Ed

Young people should get age-appropriate, medically accurate information and answers to their questions about sex and relationships, without being shamed or judged.



National Sexuality Education Standards



Essential Content

There are 7 topics chosen as the minimum, essential content and skills for K-12 sexuality education. The standards for each one of these topics vary by grade level. ^{viii}



Essential Content

1. Anatomy and Physiology
2. Puberty and Adolescent Development
3. Identity
4. Pregnancy and Reproduction
5. Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV
6. Healthy Relationships
7. Personal Safety

Teen Council Program

Teen Council

- Anchorage and Juneau
- 22 members
- Extensive Training
- Formal and Informal Ed
- Peer Led Sex Ed





Why it matters?

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Public health authorities agree:

Comprehensive and medically accurate sexual health education is...

The best way to help young people stay healthy!



Comprehensive sex education is essential to young people's health, relationships, and life goals – young people deserve to have the information, resources, and skills they need to protect their health and build their future.

Thank you.

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