

Young People & Comprehensive Sex Ed Messaging Guide

To: Members of Congress

From: URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

Purpose: Message guide on how to talk about young people and abortion access. Talking points to include issues such as: gestational bans, parental involvement laws, and accessing abortion services.

For follow up, questions or policy requests please contact:

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Medically Accurate Information: Only 17 states require that students be taught medically accurate information.

- ★ Without access to comprehensive knowledge, students are unable to understand the weight of what they're consenting to, increasing the risk of teen pregnancy and of spreading STIs.
- ★ Inaccurate information is dangerous. As young people grow older, they will inevitably be exposed to the reality of sexual contact and sexuality. Equipping them with accurate knowledge earlier has been proven to have a positive effect on increasing the safety of their experiences- both in terms of contraception and consent.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion: Only 9 states require that discussion of LGBTQ+ identities be inclusive and affirming. Even worse, 7 states either completely prohibit educators from discussing LGBTQ+ identities, or require that they frame such identities and relationships in an outwardly negative way.

- ★ If LGBTQ+ students do not see their experiences reflected (or see them shamed), they are likely to internalize shame regarding their identity.

- ★ Sex education that further stigmatizes LGTBQ+ youth leaves a significant portion of students uninformed on topics such as contraceptive methods, STI prevention, consent, pleasure, and healthy relationships.

Consent: Only 8 states (+ DC) require sex education to include lessons on consent.

- ★ Teaching consent as a fundamental aspect of sex ed is critical because it allows young people to safely participate in sexual experiences without accumulating trauma.
- ★ Furthermore, defining consent as freely given, enthusiastic, and revocable at any point allows students to understand when their boundaries are being violated.
- ★ It is essential that, throughout discussions of consent, victim-blaming never occurs, to help students identify harmful behaviors without shame.

Sex Positivity:

- ★ If a student's sex ed program stigmatizes conversations surrounding pre-marital or non-heteronormative sexual experiences, that student is likely to internalize shame that can lead to poor self confidence.
- ★ When sexual education lessons facilitate productive conversations about consent and pleasure, students are likely to foster healthier relationships in the future.
- ★ Giving young people the tools to view sex as a healthy and normal outlet (as opposed to something they should be ashamed of, something they cannot do, or something they have to do) over which they have choice, equips them with better communication skills.

Healthy Relationships:

- ★ A critical aspect of comprehensive sex ed is ensuring that young people are able to distinguish between a healthy and unhealthy relationship, and are equipped with the tools to safely end an unhealthy one.
- ★ Important aspects to discuss with young people are:
 - Consent
 - How to set and enforce boundaries
 - What to do if a student is experiencing sexual or intimate partner violence
 - Etc.

One Liners:

- ★ Young people deserve sex ed that is gender inclusive, trauma-informed, free of stigma, and allows for conversations surrounding pleasure.

- ★ Comprehensive sex ed is essential to the health and safety of young people.
- ★ Sexuality is healthy and normal. Young people deserve to express theirs without shame.
- ★ Effective sex ed programs allow students to feel safe and supported, regardless of whether they choose to engage in sexual activity or not.
- ★ Teaching abstinence-only is a disservice to young people. Providing students with medically accurate and comprehensive information has been proven to be more effective in reducing unwanted pregnancy and STIs.
- ★ Productive sexual education does not shame students for their sexuality or STI status; it provides young people with the skills necessary to decide what healthy sex lives look like for them.

Medically Accurate Information:

- <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/sex-education/sex-education-laws-and-state-attacks>
- <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

LGBTQ+ Inclusion:

- <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/sex-education/sex-education-laws-and-state-attacks>

Consent:

- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/29/health/sex-education-consent-in-public-schools-trnd/index.html>

Healthy Relationships:

- <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-st-louis-region-southwest-missouri/blog/that-8-letter-word-including-pleasure-in-sex-education>

Sex Positivity:

- <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-st-louis-region-southwest-missouri/blog/that-8-letter-word-including-pleasure-in-sex-education>