



The State of Sexual Health Education in Ohio

Sexual Health Education In Ohio

- ★ Unlike all other states, Ohio has no health education standards, including no standards for sexual health education in public schools. Currently, the board of education of each school district must establish a health curriculum for all schools under their control, which includes information on HIV and sexually transmitted infections.¹
- ★ State law currently requires that public schools must cover content that stresses abstinence, including abstinence-only until marriage (AOUM) curricula and the potential negative outcomes of young people having sex.²
- ★ Ohio's Revised Code specifically mandates that the school board of education must establish a curriculum that includes the following:³
 - Stress that students should abstain from sexual activity until marriage;
 - Teach the potential physical, psychological-emotional, and social side effects of participating in sexual activity outside of marriage;
 - Teach that conceiving children out of wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;
 - Stress that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are serious possible hazards of sexual activity;
 - Advise students of the laws pertaining to the financial responsibility of parents to children born in and out of wedlock; and
 - Advise students of the circumstances under which it is criminal to have sexual contact with a person under the age of 16
- ★ The sexual health programming in Ohio's public schools is not mandated to be medically accurate, age-appropriate, culturally competent, and is not prohibited from promoting religion or biased information.⁴

¹ Ohio State Profile. SEICUS. <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OHIO09.pdf>. Accessed April 14, 2020.

² Sex and HIV Education. Guttmacher Institute. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>. Accessed April 14, 2019.

³ Instruction in Venereal Disease Education Emphasizing Abstinence. Lawriter Ohio Laws and Rules. <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3313.6011>. Accessed April 15, 2020.

⁴ Ibid



- ★ In 2015-2016, Ohio ranked 7th and 10th in the country for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia among people between the ages of 15 to 19.⁵
- ★ In 2016, Ohio there were over 19,000 reported infections among those under 20 years old.⁶
- ★ The age group with the most diagnosis was 20 to 24 years old with 204 diagnoses, and there were 57 HIV diagnoses in Ohio youth under 20 years old.
- ★ There are no requirements for sexual health education curriculum to be inclusive of LGBTQIA+ young people's experiences or needs. LGBTQ youth often times experience social stigma about their sexual choices or identities. Stigma comes in many forms, such as discrimination, harassment, family disapproval, social rejection, and violence. This put LGBTQIA+ young people at greater increased risk for certain negative health outcomes, including higher rates of HIV, syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases, and suicide.⁷

Recommendations: How Can Ohio Improve Access to Sexual Health Education In Ohio?

Ohio's lack of health education requirements and abstinence only approach to sexual health and relationships is failing to equip young people with the information and resources they need to live healthy lives and engage in safe, consensual sex and relationships.

- ★ Pass and enact **Ohio House Bill 165**, which create health education standards for Ohio either by adopting the broadly accepted health standards created by the American Association for Health Education or by enacting ones created by the Ohio Board of Education based on national health education standards.⁸
- ★ Stop **Ohio House Bill 90**, would require the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Board of Education (OBE) to implement a costly, abstinence-only instructional program in public schools that focuses on anti-abortion values such as

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NCHHSTP AtlasPlus. Updated 2019. Accessed on April 15, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/atlas/index.htm>.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Adolescent and School Health: Health Considerations for LGBTQ Youth. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed April 15, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/health-considerations-lgbtq-youth.htm>.

⁸ Ohio Lawmaker Wants to End Ohio's Status As Only State Without Health Education Standards. The Columbus Dispatch. Accessed April 15, 2020. <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20190609/lawmaker-wants-to-end-ohios-status-as-only-state-without-health-education-standards>.



"the humanity of the unborn child".⁹

- ★ Implement other recommendations and best practices outlined by the Center for Community Solutions.¹⁰

⁹ Ohio Humanity of Unborn Child Bill. Rewire.news. Accessed April 15, 2020.

<https://rewire.news/legislative-tracker/law/ohio-humanity-of-unborn-child-bill-hb-90/>.

¹⁰ The State Sex Ed. 2017 Community Assessment Report. The Center For Community Solutions. Accessed April 15, 2020. <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/state-of-sex-ed/>.