

# FACTS FOR THE FAITH COMMUNITY

**Young people need access to age-appropriate, honest and complete health information to protect their health and plan for their futures.**

Effective health education helps young people navigate sexual development and become healthy adults. It builds on a foundation of knowledge and skills relating to human development, relationships, decision-making, abstinence, contraception and disease prevention. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is leading a group of educators and experts in developing the [Nebraska Health Education Standards](#), creating a framework for K-12 health education in our state. NDE is led by an elected board, who will ultimately vote on these health standards in fall of 2021.

**Effective health education** promotes social and emotional learning that **contributes to academic achievement, fewer truancies, reduced risk-taking and healthy relationships.** In fact, research shows that effective health education increases student efficacy in:

- Empathy
- Respect for others and increased bystander interventions
- Communication
- Positive self-image (including body image)
- Increase recognition of gender equity
- Increased sense of self-control and safety

When **young people are affirmed and have safe spaces**—homes, learning environments, faith communities—they have **positive emotional well-being** and can **achieve academic success.**

The new standards provide a framework for students to develop skills and knowledge for healthy outcomes. This includes essential and age-appropriate introductions to the concepts of **gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, consent, safe touch, bodily autonomy, birth control, pregnancy and disease prevention, mental well-being** and more. This is **life-saving information** for students of all identities.

## YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

How do you show up to support young people in your community? These new health standards will positively impact all young people and your support can help set the standard for health education in our state. **The Nebraska Board of Education needs to hear from you!**

## Take Action!

Contact [your Nebraska State Board of Education member](#) to let them know that you support **inclusive, complete, honest and equitable health education standards.** Share your expertise or personal experience regarding access to effective health education. Additional talking points are on the next page.

The State Board of Education meets on the first Friday of every month, except in July. The vote on the health standards is tentatively scheduled for fall 2021. Your consistent support for this process is needed to ensure that all young people have access to effective health education in Nebraska.

## FAITH LEADERS ROLE IN SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION



Of young Nebraskans reporting religious/spiritual beliefs,

**36%**

said their religious/spiritual leaders share information or opinions on sexual and reproductive health occasionally or frequently.

**Almost 50%**

found the information from their religious leader at least somewhat beneficial, with the benefits increasing if the conversations happened with more frequency.



**1 in 3**

high school students experiences dating violence by the time they turn 18.



LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were

**40%**

less likely to report a suicide attempt.



## Health Standards Talking Points for the *Faith Community*

### SUPPORTING ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

- All people are sacred and valuable, and we support providing young people with effective health education so they have the tools and teachings they need to be whole, healthy and safe.
- When young people are affirmed and have safe spaces—homes, learning environments, faith communities—they have positive emotional well-being and can achieve academic success.
- Representation matters. We believe it is essential that young people see themselves and their peers in a healthy manner so that they can support one another and envision a bright future for themselves.
- Having affirmative spaces that honor all young people is life-saving and preventative education—from sexual violence, bullying, suicide, STIs and unintended pregnancy. It not only keeps young people alive, but it allows them to thrive.
- LGBTQ youth face higher risks than their peers, including bullying at school and higher rates of suicide attempts. By supporting inclusive health education, we are supporting all students' well-being.

### SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE HEALTH STANDARDS

- We must recognize young people as whole people and meet them where they are in order to fully support their well-being.
- Health education is most impactful when it includes information and examples that are inclusive of diverse cultures and identities, including gender, race, religion, age, ability and sexual orientation.
- Shaming and silencing anyone, especially young people, leads to negative health outcomes. We support open, honest and early conversations that are age appropriate.