

FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Get Involved! Your Voice Matters!

Young people deserve effective health education that is complete, honest and inclusive to protect their health and plan for their futures.

Effective health education, including inclusive and honest sex education, provides all young people with the skills and information to make informed decisions. 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.

In Nebraska, **57% of students have sex by the time they graduate high school**, and yet, **only 8% of students have ever been tested for an STD**. Students need shame-free information to care for their well-being. Effective health education includes:

- Access to age-appropriate, honest and complete information to help **navigate sexual development** and **make informed decisions**;
- Essential, age-appropriate introductions to a range of concepts, including **gender identity** and **expression, sexual orientation, consent, safe touch, bodily autonomy, birth control, pregnancy** and **disease prevention, mental well-being** and more; and
- **Inclusive, equitable health education** that creates a school environment where **students feel cared for** and **supported**.

It's past time for schools in Nebraska to update their health standards to reflect the lived realities of all young people, including LGBTQ youth and youth of color. This will create school environments where young people feel seen, heard and respected.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Have you experienced ineffective health education (that includes bad sex education or none at all)? Were your identities represented in what you were being taught? Was the information presented in a shaming and blaming way? We can do better for future generations! **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.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE NEED EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION



57%

of Nebraska high school students have sex by the time they graduate high school.



1 in 3

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



17.7%

of all Nebraska high school students seriously consider attempting suicide with

60.1%

of these students identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (LGBQ).



Only 23%

of Nebraska schools instruct how to consistently and correctly use a condom, yet young people are disproportionately impacted by STDs.



Health Standards Talking Points for *Young People*

THE WHY

- Providing young people with the skills and information we need to make informed decisions is more effective than a simple “just say no” approach. When we, as young people, have limited information, we have a limited understanding.
- We need information, not a lecture. We need sex education that is inclusive, honest, complete and accurate.
- Accurate and complete health education (that includes sex ed) helps young people take steps to protect our health and plan for our futures—including delaying sex, using protection and building healthy relationships.
- We need our education to match our complex reality. Current abstinence-only-until-marriage programs only mention birth control in terms of failure rates, ignore the needs of LGBTQ youth and promote outdated gender roles, not to mention contain false information.
- Providing age-appropriate information about consent and bodily autonomy (the right for a person to have control over what happens to their own body) will impact our relationship with our bodies and help us participate in healthy relationships throughout our life.
- Having a trusted adult delivering honest and complete information in a safe environment benefits all students.

THE NEED

- Health education that is effective is inclusive of all young people, including LGBTQ youth and youth of color. When you meet us where we are and speak to our lived realities, we have stronger relationships, better grades and a healthier life.
- It's past time for all school districts in our state to update their health standards to reflect our realities and include information on sexual orientation, gender identity, consent, safe touch, bodily autonomy, birth control, pregnancy and disease prevention mental well-being and more. This creates a school where we feel seen, heard and respected.
- We want to have open and honest conversations about healthy relationships and sex that are accurate, fact-based and not full of shame.
- Abstinence-only education is ineffective and also problematic. Nearly 60% of students have sex by the time they graduate high school. Students like me need information that is honest and that will give me the information I need to protect my overall health. Withholding information doesn't stop young people from having sex, it just makes them less safe.

THE IMPACT

- We need more information. Delaying sex is one part of the conversation, so is information about birth control. Understanding healthy relationships before we need it (not after!) helps us plan for our future and make informed decisions.
- Students who receive quality health education are more likely to delay sexual activities and to use protection when they do have sex.
- Young people today live in complex, media-saturated worlds and are more likely to have mental health issues and experience sexual violence. Providing complete, honest and inclusive health education from credible sources will improve these health outcomes.
- LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education that reflects transgender and nonbinary identities benefits all young people and creates safe spaces for young people to exist.