

2024 WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEXUAL EDUCATION

HEALTH ROOMS, CLINICS, AND
COUNSELING OFFICES

EQUIPPING PARENTS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

DEAR PARENTS – AND GRANDPARENTS AND CONCERNED CITIZENS

We know you're deeply concerned about what's happening in many public and private schools. Students not learning basic skills. Boys playing girls sports. Profane, violent, and sexual books in school classrooms and libraries. Children trained as radical activists.

That's why Focus on the Family and Family Policy Alliance released *Back-to-School – For Parents* in 2020. But since then, many more problems in our nation's schools have come to the forefront.

That's why we've updated this helpful resource: [Equipping Parents for Back-to-School](#). It's being released first in six free PDFs, then all the units together in a free download.

Equipping Parents prepares and empowers you to improve your children's education, protect them from harmful ideologies, and talk to them about difficult, controversial issues.

This second PDF covers what's happening in sexual education and school health rooms, clinics, and counseling offices. The stories and incidents we relate are not included to engender fear, but simply to demonstrate what is really happening in our nation's schools. Equipping Parents then offers effective information and tools for addressing serious concerns.

We are grateful for concerned parents, family members, church leaders, and citizens like you, who care about children and their education. Bless you as you work to improve local schools for your own children and all children in your community.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY AND FAMILY POLICY ALLIANCE

Links to outside articles and resources are for informational purposes and do not imply an endorsement from Focus on the Family or Family Policy Alliance.

SEXUAL EDUCATION

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL?

+ INTRODUCED TO PORNOGRAPHY

"I began reading all these lessons for children as young as five that talked about sexual intercourse, how their private organs worked, and even introduced pornography to really young children."

CONCERNED MOTHER IN WASHINGTON STATE

For decades, basic sex education promoted abstinence until marriage with a focus on biology, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease/infection (STD/I) prevention. Even today, many states and schools offer this kind of healthy sexuality education, sometimes under names like "Sexual Risk Avoidance," "Abstinence-Centered," or "Abstinence Focused."²

But a completely different message is offered — and even mandated by state legislatures and departments of education — in many schools, under names like "Comprehensive Sex Education" (CSE), "Abstinence-based" or "Abstinence-Plus." These are "rights-based" and "pleasure-based" sexuality curriculums, taught in many public schools, sexualizing and confusing children, and replacing the facts- and marriage-based sex education of the past.

WHO'S DRIVING THIS AGENDA?

Parents may be surprised to learn **Planned Parenthood** is one of the largest writers and distributors of sex education curriculum in the world — a curriculum framework teaching that every child, of any age, has "sexual rights," including the right to experience sexual pleasure, no matter what, as long as there is "consent."

For example, **International Planned Parenthood Federation** (IPPF) has produced a resource, "Exclaim — young people's guide to 'Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration.'"³ The publication explains what this means:

! **Young people are sexual beings.** They have sexual needs, desires, fantasies and dreams. It is important for **all young people around the world to be able to explore, experience and express their sexualities in healthy, positive, pleasurable and safe ways.** This can only happen when young people's sexual rights are guaranteed.

"Exclaim!" says these sexual rights are "universal, inalienable, and indivisible" — just like constitutionally protected rights. The document, promoted to young people around the globe, defines "inalienable" this way:

! Everyone is entitled to human rights simply for being human. Human rights cannot be taken away or given up from anyone, **irrespective of their age,** gender, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, HIV status or health status (emphasis added).

So Planned Parenthood believes that sexual rights exist at any age and are as important as other human rights, like religious freedom and free speech. The organization does go on to say that these rights and education about sexuality should be "age appropriate." However, Planned Parenthood and other CSE advocates decide what is "age appropriate," not parents.

"Exclaim!" states that sexual pleasure is a sexual right, arguing, "**All young people are entitled to sexual well-being and pleasure,** whether or not they want to have children."

Certainly sex is pleasurable, but CSE separates sex from two of its main purposes, which are to unite a husband and wife in a one-flesh, faithful, monogamous marital union and to bring new life into the world.

Planned Parenthood is not the only organization promoting radical sexualization of children. SIECUS recently changed its name from the Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States to **SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change.** The organization says, "**Sex ed is a vehicle for**

social change. Full stop." Here's what the organization means by this:

! With sex education, we have a golden opportunity to create a culture shift — tackling the misinformation, shame, and stigma that create the basis for many of today's sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, such as: reproductive justice, LGBTQ equality, sexual violence prevention, gender equity, dismantling white supremacy⁴

You may rightly wonder what some of these have to do with teaching children about biology, reproduction, and delaying sexual activity until marriage.

Another group working to sexualize children is **Advocates for Youth**, a policy and advocacy organization that trains and organizes youth activists; created and supports the expansion of School-Based Health Centers/Clinics (more on these, below); and promotes "racial justice and intersectionality," homosexuality, and sexual identity confusion.⁵ The organization develops and distributes sex ed curriculum and resources, such as ***Rights, Respect, Responsibility (3Rs)*** and online sex ed videos for children through its managing partnership with AMAZE.⁶

Parents should also be aware of the organization **Answer: sex ed**, honestly, based in the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers University. The organization "provides and promotes unfettered access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them."⁷ Answer launched the magazine and website ***Sex, etc.***, "to offer sexuality education directly to teens," with articles written by teenagers.⁸

Together, Advocates for Youth, Answer, and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change created a partnership called Future of Sex Education (FoSE). That organization released ***National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 (Second Edition)***.⁹ This sounds like an official government resource, but it promotes CSE and was developed by extremist organizations that work to confuse and sexualize children — beginning at age five.

SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE EDUCATION

+ GENDER DIVERSITY

“Young children (as young as pre-school) are **quite capable of understanding and discussing issues related to gender diversity, including gender expectations, gender nonconformity, and gender-based oppression**” (their emphasis).

ANSWERS FOR YOUTH – “THE CASE FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION: IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER AND GENDER NORMS”¹⁰

CSE curriculum is written and taught based on the faulty assumption that every student is not only thinking about sex but is going to have it, sooner rather than later. In reality, the majority of American teens are choosing abstinence. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control’s “High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021” reported that 70% of high school students have not had sex.¹¹

But with this faulty assumption about students’ sexual activity, these often explicit materials are focused not on teaching children how to abstain from sexual activity and avoid negative health risks. Instead, they teach children how to practice “safe” or “safer” sex, while even providing tips on maximizing pleasure.

These curriculums also advocate for and promote all FDA-approved contraception, including drugs that cause abortions (known as abortifacients). In addition, CSE “objectively” teaches that abortion is a “natural pregnancy outcome.”

CSE also teaches the spurious concepts of “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to young children, beginning in kindergarten. CSE advocates for self-determination and expression of dozens of “sexual identities” for children.

In contrast, Sexual Risk Avoidance Education offers healthy sex education curriculum that places the physical and mental health of our children first by promoting or at least stressing the long-lasting benefits of abstinence until marriage. It does not come from a “sexual rights” perspec-

tive but a science- and health-based perspective. Most importantly, it is not driven by multimillion-dollar organizations that put profits before people. Healthy sex education is driven by parent communities who know what’s best for their children and have the power to define the limits of “safe,” “healthy” and “age-appropriate” for their children.

Parents overwhelmingly support SRA, with different surveys showing support for teaching the dominant themes of SRA, such as instruction in skills that help students wait for sex and education that shares “the medically accurate limitations of condoms for preventing pregnancy and disease.”¹²

While proponents tout the effectiveness of CSE, research has not demonstrated this. One analysis of 103 studies of CSE effectiveness (60 in the U.S. and 43 outside) found:¹³

» *Lack of Effectiveness: Only six found evidence of effectiveness (improvement on a protective outcome—abstinence, condom use, pregnancy, or STDs—12 months after the program, for the intended population, without other negative effects). Only one of the six studies was by an independent evaluator (not the program’s developer) and the results have not been replicated.*

» *Failure Rate: School-based CSE programs that attempted to show effectiveness — by producing sustained (12-month) effects on a key protective outcome for the intended population — failed 87% of the time.*

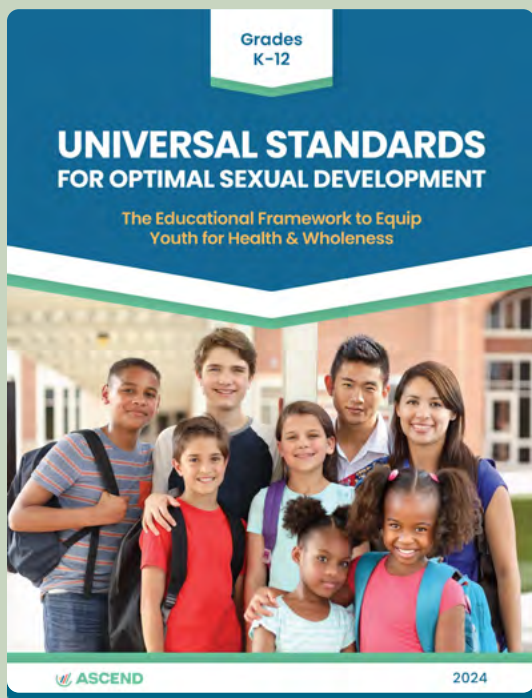
» *Negative Effects: Sixteen studies (16%) found 22 instances of harmful effects by school-based CSE, such as decreased condom use or increased sexual activity, number of partners, oral sex, forced sex, STDs, or pregnancy.*

In contrast, “Out of 17 studies of AE [Abstinence Education] in the U.S., seven found evidence of effectiveness: an increase in teen abstinence at least 12 months after the program for the intended population, without other negative effects. Five of the seven studies were by independent evaluators, and the results have not yet been replicated.”¹⁴

UNIVERSAL STANDARDS FOR OPTIMAL SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

K-12 Standards for Optimal Sexual Development, from The Medical Institute For Sexual Health, provides an alternative to the so-called “National Sex Education Standards.” Created by SRA proponents, The standards: “set clear expectations for attitudes and behaviors that will help students succeed in elementary, middle, and high school, as they journey toward adulthood. Offering a researched-based framework for empowering health and wholeness through clearly defined learning objectives during each stage of youth development, these standards are a guide for local and state decision-makers to set responsible sex education policies.”⁶⁸

[States and school districts can use these as an alternative to the age-inappropriate and damaging FoSE standards.](#)



WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

+ ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

“Not only are younger children able to discuss sexuality-related issues but that **the early grades may, in fact, be the best time to introduce topics** related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, gender equality, and social justice related to the LGBTQ community before hetero- and cisnormative [referring to those who accept and embrace their biological sex] values and assumptions become more deeply ingrained and less mutable” (their emphasis).

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH¹⁵

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) teaches our children radical and controversial ideas that many families object to, often uses explicit and graphic language and illustrations, and leads to increased sexual activity and other adverse mental and physical health outcomes for our children. CSE, as a whole, is not based in science but extremist social dogma which is disparaging of traditional notions of monogamy, marriage, committed relationships, and abstinence until marriage.

Here are some examples of statements about indoctrinating youth from CSE resources, curriculum, and advocacy groups. These groups also advocate for teaching sex ed not just in health or science classes, but across the curriculum. Advocates for Youth writes:

! Children need safe spaces in which to experience, play with, and begin to challenge the naturalized assumptions about gender.¹⁶

Many of the positive outcomes and promising approaches that worked toward creating affirming, inclusive school environments occurred not in traditional health or sex education classes, but in social studies, English, physical education, mathematics, music, and art.¹⁷

FoSE's "National Standards" say children in grades 3-5 (ages 8 to 10) should be able to:¹⁸

- ! Explain common human sexual development and the role of hormones (e.g., romantic and sexual feelings, masturbation, mood swings, timing of pubertal onset). Describe the role hormones play in the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional changes during adolescence and the potential role of hormone blockers on young people who identify as transgender.
- Define and explain differences between cisgender, transgender, gender nonbinary, gender expansive, and gender identity.

The so-called "National Standards" say adolescents in grades 6-8 (ages 11 to 13) should be taught how to:¹⁹

- ! Define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, two-spirit, asexual, pansexual).
- Define vaginal, oral, and anal sex.
- Explain there are many methods of short- and long-term contraception that are safe and effective and describe how to access them.
- Define racism and intersectionality and describe their impacts on sexual health.

There are myriad examples we could give²⁰ — but you get the picture. Children are not meant to bear the weight of adult sexuality, and CSE teaches them, at early ages, an ideology that sexualizes and confuses them.

APPROACHES TO SEX EDUCATION

Grab this helpful PDF from Lori Kuykendall at Beacon Health Education Resources:

APPROACHES TO SEX EDUCATION		
Comprehensive Sex Education Sexual Risk Reduction		Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Optimal Sexual Health Education
Abstinence-Plus	Abstinence-Based	Abstinence-Centered Abstinence-Focused (Abstinence-Only)
Focuses on reducing risks, "safer" sex		Focuses on avoiding risks, keeping students safe
Dual message: Guides students to choose abstinence ("which can mean different things to different people") or consensual sexual activity using contraception		Directive message: Guides students to choose abstinence (delaying all sexual activity until "long-term, mutually monogamous relationship" (CDC), likely marriage)
Rights-based, pleasure-based (sexual response systems)		Science-based, health-based (reproductive system)
Advocates for contraception- emphasizing effectiveness and minimizing ineffectiveness		Educates about contraception- both effectiveness and ineffectiveness or risks (human use really varies) and side effects
Teaches consent and negotiation skills for sexual activity		Teaches refusal and resistance skills for sexual avoidance
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are "normal and common"		STIs or Sexually Transmitted Diseases can cause serious health concerns and can/should be avoided
Instruction segmented for students of different sexual orientation and gender identity, "LGBTQ-focused" lessons		Information provided and risk avoidance promoted for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity
Abortion presented as a "safe, reproductive health care choice" and "right"		Abortion, if discussed, presented with state laws, physical and emotional risks (emphasizing parenting and adoption)
Parent relationships, knowledge and reliability undermined. Students encouraged to seek other help		Parent involvement, communication and authority upheld. Family values supported
Both approaches seek to provide students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medically-accurate, age-appropriate, culturally-sensitive, and trauma- informed instruction • Evidence-based or evidence-informed content and classroom methodology • Healthy, supportive relationships, including communication skills • Positive futures, including goal-setting and decision-making skillsSexual abuse, harassment and dating violence prevention • Compassionate support for those who have been harmed in the past. 		

BEACON CONTACT
Lori Kuykendall, MPH President lorik@beaconhealthed.com 972-955-7813

HOW DO I RECOGNIZE

COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED IN THE CLASSROOM?

Not all CSE curriculums will go by this name. Many are called “abstinence-plus” or “abstinence-based.” Here are specific examples of content to be aware of that may indicate your school is teaching radical comprehensive sex education.

Teaches Abortion: Often these programs require or permit the teaching of abortion as a “natural pregnancy outcome” or “pregnancy options.”²¹ Some states, like Colorado and California, require teachers to teach abortion as morally equivalent to other pregnancy outcomes like adoption or parenting.²² If a teacher teaches adoption or abstinence, that teacher must also teach abortion and not emphasize any choice as ethically good or better.

Even in states that don’t mandate this, many schools are already teaching our children about abortion. Schools even allow Planned Parenthood instructors to come into the classroom and teach sex education and push their abortion-driven agenda. Some schools even pass out specific information about where a child can get an abortion and how the state government can pay for the expenses.

Some states *do prohibit* schools from providing abortion referrals; it’s important to be aware of laws in your state.²³

Advocates for Contraception and Potentially Promotes Abortifacients: Many states require that students be taught about contraception, and some require the list of FDA-approved contraceptives be taught, which includes abortifacient (day-after) pills like Plan B and Ella.²⁴ Some schools also give information about where to find contraceptives.

Teaches LGBT Sexual Experiences: Several states now require the teaching of “the experiences and needs of communities of color; immigrant communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities,”²⁵ others use code language for LGBT experiences like “culturally sensitive” or “culturally appropriate” content. One of the more controversial aspects of CSE is these lessons often include

graphic and explicit discussions of sexual positions and the promotion, description, or depiction of various sex acts.

Curriculums, classroom resources, and videos portray various sexual identities, attractions and behaviors as safe, healthy, normal, and desirable aspects of a relationship. In truth, it is the sole right of parents to define the boundaries of safe, healthy, and normal for their child, with consideration for their own sincere religious and moral beliefs. It is certainly not the right of the state to do so.

Often CSE stresses children have “healthy” attitudes and behaviors regarding sexual activity, sexual identities, and sexual orientations: For example, Colorado’s law *requires* that the CSE curriculum must not use “shame-based or stigmatizing language,” “employ gender stereotypes,” or exclude teaching on the experiences of LGBT individuals.²⁶ This law specifically targets sincere beliefs and values about gender identity and sexual relationships (such as abstinence and opposite-sex monogamy in marriage), marginalizing them as hateful views that should not be taught in the classroom and should be censored from the mouths of teachers.

Prohibits Stressing Abstinence-Only Education: More current CSE laws prohibit abstinence-only sex education from being taught or even stressed! Most parents actually want their children to practice abstinence until marriage. In fact, the nation’s abstinence trend has been increasing, meaning the majority of teens are choosing to wait.²⁷

Requires Sex Education for Elementary Students: Some states require even kindergarteners to be taught basic “sex education.”²⁸ States and school districts that adopt the FoSE “National Standards” will follow this practice. This includes teaching impressionable elementary school students that “biological sex” is a “social construct” and they may have been “born in the wrong body.”

Activists use popular and colorful graphics like the “Gender Unicorn” or “My Genderbread Person” to teach about “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”²⁹ The resources are readily available online, for any teacher that wants to introduce this into the classroom, with activity plans and “fill-in-the blank” worksheets to go along with them. (See page 9 for examples.)

SEX EDUCATION WORDS WE DON'T LIKE:

The phrase “comprehensive sex education” isn’t always used by schools, school districts, or legislators. Usually, the following terms will pop up in the law or curriculum guidelines, raising red flags that you might need to take additional steps to protect your child. While some of these phrases may seem harmless or even like a good thing, liberal activists have found new and twisted ways to reinterpret the definitions of some of these innocuous phrases. If you see all or most of these phrases in your curriculum guidelines, you’re almost certainly dealing with Comprehensive Sex Education.

✘ ABSTINENCE-BASED OR ABSTINENCE PLUS:

These are substitute terms for CSE, promoting a dual message: Students can choose abstinence, “which can mean different things to different people” or consensual sexual activity using contraception. The focus is still “rights-based” and “pleasure-based,” rather than teaching that sex unites a husband and wife in marriage, with the potential to create new life.

✘ AGE-APPROPRIATE:

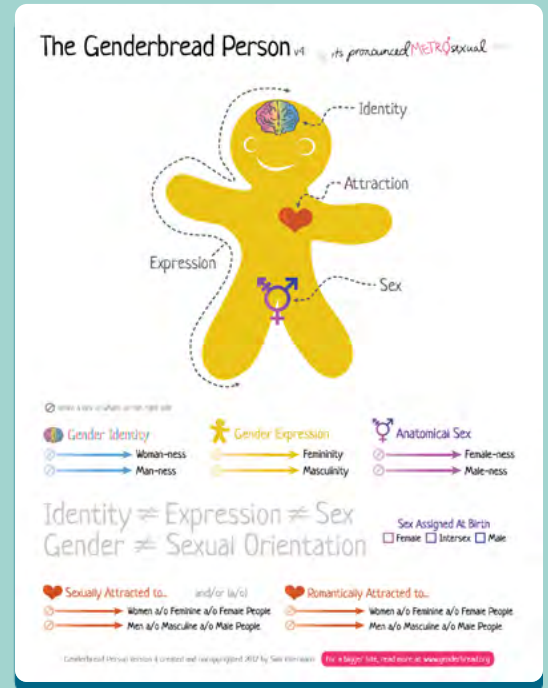
In more liberal states, this phrase is almost sure to mean the content will not be age-appropriate. This very subjective term allows activists and large organizations like Planned Parenthood and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change to push schools to teach elementary school students about homosexuality, by highlighting different types of families, and “gender identity,” by blurring male-female distinctions.

Looking at the “Gender Unicorn” and “Genderbread Person,” you can see that neither of these graphics teaches young children about biology or embracing their innate masculinity or femininity. They introduce confusing and very adult ideas about sexual attraction and identity to elementary, middle, and high school students:

- 1 Your head — mind and thoughts — might be a different “gender” than your body.
- 2 The way you dress can express a different “gender” than how you feel in your head, different than your bodily sex, or different than both!

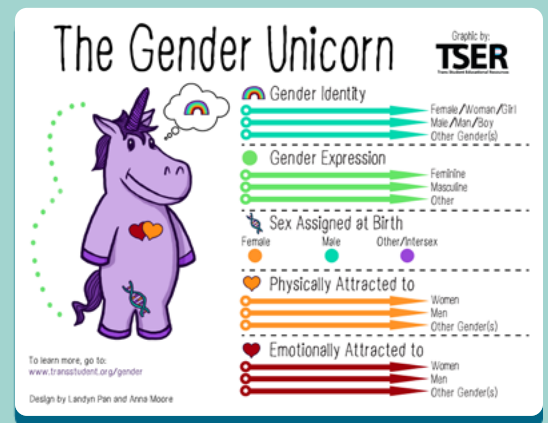
THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

BY SAM KELLERMAN



GENDER UNICORN

BY TRANS STUDENT EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



- 3 Biological sex has nothing to do with “gender.”
- 4 There are an infinite number of “gender identities.”
- 5 Sexual, romantic, and physical attractions define a person.
- 6 Boys being romantically and sexually attracted to boys is as normal as boys being sexually attracted to girls. And girls being romantically and sexually attracted to girls is as normal as girls being attracted to boys.

All of this is intended to indoctrinate children into affirming and unquestionably accepting the LGBT ideology that has no basis in science or fact.

Most people believe our biological sex and gender identity are — or should be — one and the same, with our biology informing our identity. Bodily sexual reality is not chosen or changeable. Also, many people of different faiths only affirm and encourage heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships and sex only within marriage. Their faith does not support the idea that same-sex relationships are normal and healthy. Many families also object to their young children being taught sex education, period.

✘ CONSENT EDUCATION OR “TEACHING CONSENT”:

Sounds very reasonable right? While lessons teaching consent make it clear all sexual activity should be consensual, they also subtly teach all sexual activity is okay provided consent is obtained. It teaches children “yes, means yes!”, instead of “no, means no!” and may not allow students to understand the implications of grooming by predators, coercive or other abusive behaviors, or even abusive sexual relationships.

Being empowered to say “no” is an entirely different idea than “being empowered to say yes” or learning to negotiate for sexual activity. Many families are not okay with the government teaching their child all sex is good sex — provided there is consent. Children have extreme difficulty discerning grooming and other abusive behaviors, particularly from older students or adults, and this type of education might make a child believe this abuse is okay.

While we want to teach our children to say “no” to unwanted touch or activities, teaching “consent” puts the onus on children to protect themselves, rather than on the adults around them who should shield and defend them.

Finally, children cannot legally consent to sex to begin with. But this is usually not addressed in CSE teaching about consent. Adults and even more mature teens are in a far easier position to exploit, manipulate, and harass younger teens and children all under the guise that “they consented.” This is why the law draws a bold, non-negotiable line that children cannot consent to sex. Yet CSE teaches children as young as elementary school all the different ways they can say “yes to sex.”

✘ COMPREHENSIVE:

This word, unlike many of the others, is not a euphemism, it means exactly what it says. The sex education your child will receive is all-encompassing, meaning your child could be taught the full gamut of human sexual experience, controversial or not, healthy and safe or not.

✘ CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE OR CULTURALLY SENSITIVE:

These are catch-all terms that allow liberal states, school boards, teacher unions or individual teachers to force into the curriculum a variety of controversial sexual experiences. The phrase often refers to addressing the potential romantic and sexual experiences of LGBT-identified youth, but this category could certainly expand in the future to include the ever-growing number of “sexual orientations” or “sexual identities.”

✘ MEDICALLY ACCURATE OR SCIENTIFICALLY ACCURATE:

These words sound great together. However, the current major medical organizations are left-leaning and support controversial ideologies such as transgenderism, same-sex relationships, and abortion. When curriculum is referred

to as “medically accurate” or “scientifically accurate” these controversial practices get a green light in the classroom. If you see medical organizations in your guidelines or laws, look them up and check out their stance on abortion, teen sexuality, and other topics.

As part of medical accuracy, many states require that sex education curriculum include instruction about HIV, the sexually transmitted virus that can lead to the development of AIDS. “Scientifically accurate” CSE often advocates for contraception — without teaching all the science about the ineffectiveness or risks of various methods. “Medically accurate” CSE also teaches that abortion is a “pregnancy outcome,” without describing the scientific truth that life begins at conception, the reality of what happens to the preborn child, or the truth about emotional and physical health risks for the mother.

✘ SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS OR “SAFER SEX”:

This language is also deceiving. Unfortunately, these phrases mean the government and extremist groups are defining for your children what “safe and healthy” and “safer sex” are. Safe and healthy looks different for many families, depending on their religious, moral, and ethical beliefs. Many families would object to children being taught to give consent and that all “consensual relationships are safe and healthy.” Many families would rightfully object to homosexual relationships and transgenderism, with body-damaging puberty blockers, hormones, and surgeries, touted as safe and healthy options for their children. Again, the science backs them up.

Most states use the word “healthy” in their sex education curriculum guidelines, so check to see if the words “safe,” “safer,” and “healthy” are paired with any of the other red flag terms above!



PUBLISHERS, GROUPS, AND PROGRAMS TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Look out for curriculums and resources developed and published by Planned Parenthood, SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change, Advocates for Youth, and ETR Associates. And watch for curriculums and resources that claim to comply with FoSE's *National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 (Second Edition)* or with SIECUS' *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education*.

These are commonly used CSE curriculums:

- » *Above the Waist*
- » *Be Real. Be Ready*
- » *Discovery Dating*
- » *Get Real: CSE that Works*
- » *FLASH, It's Perfectly Normal*
- » *Native Stand*
- » *Project AIM*
- » *Rights, Respect, Responsibility (aka 3 R's)*
- » *Teen Outreach*
- » *Teen Talk*

These are some federally-funded CSE programs:

- » *All4You! Positive Prevention Plus*
- » *Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protective!*
- » *¡Cuidate!*
- » *Draw the Line or Respect the Line*

- » *HealthSMART*
- » *Healthy for Life*
- » *It's Your Game: Keep It Real™ (IYG)*
- » *Making a Difference*
- » *Project SNAPP*
- » *Reducing the Risk*
- » *Safer Choices*
- » *Teen Outreach Program (TOP)*

SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO AVOID:

Some schools adopt programs that, under the guise of being anti-bullying or protecting various sexual orientations and identities, promote a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities. Extremist groups also provide curriculum, school resources, and school policy guidance, including:

- » *Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA)*
- » *The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) – LGBTQ Youth & Schools Resource Library*
- » *GLSEN - LGBTQ Students and School Sports Participation and Rainbow Library*
- » *GLSEN and National Center for Transgender Equality – Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*
- » *Human Rights Campaign – Welcoming Schools*
- » *Southern Poverty Law Center – Learning for Justice*
- » *National Black Lives Matter at School*

WORDS WE DO LIKE:

✓ SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE

Other phrases to describe SRA education include “Abstinence-Centered,” “Abstinence Focused” or “Stress Abstinence.” The term “Abstinence Only” was created by opponents of this approach and is not used by SRA proponents. SRA curriculum is an alternative to CSE that focuses on teaching students the individual and social benefits of self-control, goal setting, personal responsibility and healthy decision-making. Sexual Risk Avoidance education stresses the numerous benefits of teens delaying sex.

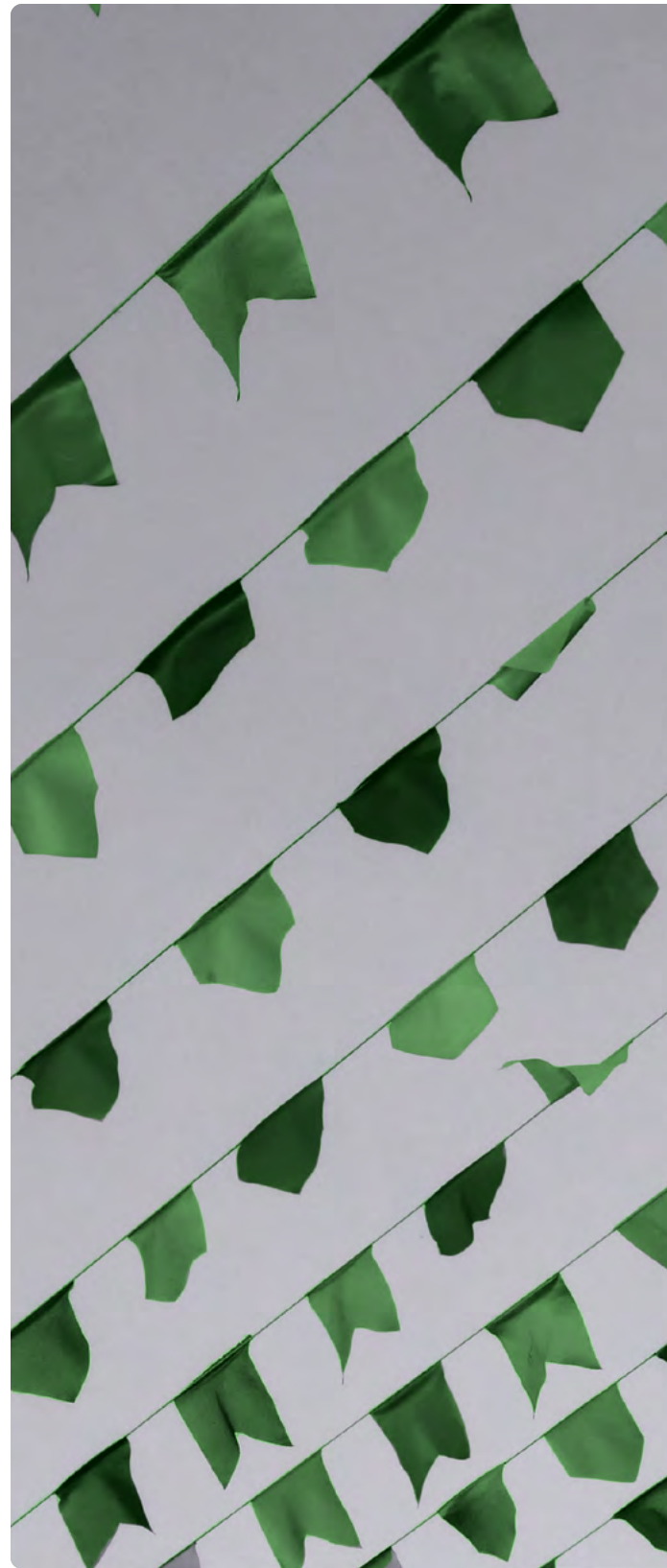
Ascend is a group that works to help youth delay sexual activity and avoid risky sexual behaviors. They explain that SRA “is the only behavior that completely protects youth from the possible consequences of sexual experimentation and is completely compatible with a strong risk avoidance public health model—SRA is the only real solution to the problem of STI’s, teen pregnancy, and emotional harm often caused by teen sexual activity.”³⁰

This approach is intended to help teens avoid all the negative outcomes of becoming sexually promiscuous early on, usually defined as before graduating from high school.

Keep in mind, just because the law permits teachers to stress abstinence does not mean it is required. In fact, in many cases, the curriculum not only does not stress abstinence, it teaches that all “consensual” sex is good sex for teens. To find out if your school is actually teaching an SRA curriculum, review the content and test it against the “Words We Do Not Like List,” on page 9. You can also check out Ascend’s resources, such as “Authentic Sexual Risk Avoidance Curricula. What You Need to Know.”

✓ OPT-IN AND OPT-OUT:

Most states allow you to opt your child out of sex education. Though your child might be automatically enrolled in sex education, you can often opt your child out of all lessons, and they should not be penalized for it. Some states even have “opt-in” programs, which means your child will not be enrolled into sex education classes without your explicit permission — placing the burden for obtaining permission on the school



rather than parents. Check out “Know Your Rights” below for steps you can take to opt your child out!

Parents should be aware that they may not be able to opt their children out of material that is part of regular school subjects, such as when the contributions of LGBT-identified individuals are taught in social studies classes.

Questions to Consider on Opting-In or Opting Out:

- 1 Where will my child go during the sex ed instruction?
- 2 Are other children opting out? How many?
- 3 What is my child going to learn or overhear from other students about the sex ed lesson?
- 4 What messages or misinformation is my child already exposed to?
- 5 How strong are my child's convictions on our family's values?

If you send your child to the main sex ed instruction, before the class: Teach your child your values and help them know what to expect. Afterward, process the information and reinforce your values.

» *Note: There is a difference between excusing your child from class and opting your child out of a class. Excused absences are often temporary, and the student is often still responsible for missed classwork. Also, the school can decline to grant permission to excuse an absence for some reasons. Opting out your child ensures they are not responsible for attending classes that are objectionable, and the student does not have to complete classroom work. (Although a school may provide alternative lessons for your child to complete.) Opting out for religious purposes is a legally protected right. (Excused absences may not be a legally protected right, depending on your reasons or the importance of the classwork.) Ensure you and the school principal and teachers are very clear about which option you are requesting and why!*

✓ PARENTAL NOTIFICATION AND/OR CONSENT

Many states require that parents must be notified prior to their child being taught or enrolled in a sex education program. These laws vary state-by-state. Check-in with your local school board or state department of education to find out if you have to be notified prior to controversial content being taught in the classroom. If not, feel free to reach out to your student's teachers and respectfully ask if they'd be willing to keep you personally informed. You have the right to examine all classroom

resources and curriculum in your child's school, including sexual education materials.

HELPFUL SEXUAL EDUCATION GROUPS, POLICY ORGANIZATIONS, AND CURRICULUM PROVIDERS:

- » [Ascend](#) — Provides information about CSE and SRA curriculums; training; programs and resources for schools, parents and educators; and information about CSE.
[Authentic Sexual Risk Avoidance Curricula](#)
[Sexual Risk Avoidance Works](#)
[Sex Ed by State](#)
- » [Beacon Health Education Resources](#) — Offers training, consulting, and advocacy resources for schools, parents, and legislators.
- » [Daily Citizen](#) — Focus on the Family's culture and policy outlet, providing news, analysis, and research on issues of importance to families.
- » [Family Research Council](#) — Provides resources and analysis on issues related to faith, family, and freedom.
[Sex Education in Public Schools: Sexualization of Children and LGBT Indoctrination](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance](#) — Policy and activist organization that provides resources and tools for families.
[Save Girls Sports Education](#)
[State-Based Family Policy Councils](#)
[School Board Academy](#)

- » [Family Watch International](#) – Works to protect and promote the family as the fundamental unit of society at the international, national and local level.
Protect Child Health Coalition – Opposes efforts to sexualize children.
- » [Heritage Foundation](#) – Provides research, policy recommendations, and toolkits on various issues of concern to parents, including sexual education.
[Comprehensive Sex Education vs. Authentic Abstinence: A Study of Competing Curricula](#)
[What Do Parents Want Taught in Sex Education Programs?](#)
[You're Teaching My Child What? The Truth About Sex Education](#)
- » [Institute for Research and Evaluation](#) – Helps youth thrive by identifying elements of program effectiveness and measuring program impact using proven scientific methods.
- » [K-12 Standards for Optimal Sexual Development](#) – Offers a healthy alternative to “National Standards” from CSE activist groups.
- » [Medical Institute for Sexual Health](#) – Equips people worldwide with medically accurate information to make well-educated decisions about their sexual health.
- » [Moms for Liberty](#) – Works to improve education, stop sexualization of children, and protect parental rights.
- » [Parents Defending Education](#) - A national grassroots organization working to reclaim our schools from activists imposing harmful agendas.
- » [Stop CSE](#) – Parents’ organization working to defend the innocence of children by educating and equipping parents.

SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE CURRICULUMS AND CURRICULUM PROVIDERS:

- » [Aspire](#)
- » [For Keeps](#)
- » [Game Plan](#)
- » [Healthy Futures](#)
- » [Heritage Keepers](#)
- » [Positive Potential](#)
- » [Pure & Simple](#)
- » [REAL Essentials](#)
- » [Relationships Under Construction](#)
- » [Local Pregnancy Resource Centers](#) – These groups often teach sexual risk avoidance and create curriculums and resources for schools. Many are affiliated with PRC networks such as [Heartbeat International](#), [Care Net](#) or the [National Institute of Family and Life Advocates](#), while others are independent or part of smaller networks.

LEGAL GROUPS

Providing legal aid and information for free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights:

- » [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)
- » [The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#)
- » [Child & Parental Rights Campaign](#)
- » [First Liberty Institute](#)
- » [Liberty Counsel](#)
- » [Thomas More Society](#)

KNOW THE FACTS

- » *The delay of a child's sexual initiation past the age of 18 — and ideally until marriage — has long-lasting benefits. Teens who delay sexual activity past the age of 18 do better in school, are less likely to be exposed to sexual abuse, have increased beneficial physical and mental health outcomes, have more stable relationships, are less likely to engage in other risky behaviors like drinking, smoking and experimenting with drugs, are more social, and have greater net worth over time.³¹ Researchers are not exactly sure why early teen sex has a cascade of negative consequences, but the evidence clearly tells us one thing: Science proves it's better to wait!*
- » *Parents generally support basic sex education, but most parents do not support education that promotes early engagement in sexual behavior.³²*
- » *Parents should keep in mind that teachers often have limited control over curriculum content and subjects being taught. (This is usually controlled by the local school board, state board of education guidelines, and even federal law.) Although your teachers might really want to help you and respect your beliefs, their hands might be tied by state law or school board requirements.*
- » *The Federal Department of Education does not explicitly protect the religious freedoms of students in schools, nor do their rules address religious discrimination. But the Department of Justice does enforce religious freedom protections for students and teachers in public schools. So, if a school or school district is violating your religious beliefs (such as refusing to allow your child to opt out of sex education), you may be able to file a complaint with the Department of Justice.*

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS

- » *In many states, education is locally controlled, with school boards having the ability to choose curriculums for schools. School boards often have opportunities for parents to join review committees, speak publicly, and share thoughts and concerns. So get involved! Write — kindly but honestly — to your school board members about content that you have concerns about! There are likely other parents that share your perspective. This is where you can raise concerns, questions, and suggestions about controversial sex-ed content and content that is biased against Christians, conservatives, and others.*
- » *Vote for school board members who share your values or run for your school board! Some school districts allow district members to vote for candidates for vacant school board positions. The school district website may have information on when and where to vote and running for a school board position.*

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW:

States and local school districts are mostly responsible for the type of content they'll have in the classroom. While the federal government does not mandate sex education curriculum in state classrooms, it does fund certain sex education programs. The federal government will pay schools for using their programs. Here are some of the federally-funded programs that you may come across:

Title V State Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Grant Program/Competitive SRA Grant Program³³: These funds are available to programs that promote abstinence through Sexual Risk Avoidance Education. See list of those receiving Title V dollars by visiting the Administration for Children and Families here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/grant-funding/title-v-competitive-sexual-risk-avoidance-education-srae-grantees>

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program:³⁴ This program funds schools that claim to be teaching teens how to practice safe sex or "safer sex." In the past, these federally-funded sex education programs were focused on abstinence and teen pregnancy prevention. Today, much of the government's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program has now been outsourced to Planned Parenthood and its allies. A lot of the programs we have red-flagged above, in the section titled: Publishers, Groups and Programs to Watch Out For, are funded through this grant.

Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP): This federal program educates youth on abstinence and the use of contraceptives and pregnancy prevention, and it targets children as young as 10. It focuses on underserved communities, such as rural communities or those with high birth rates, and provides support to pregnant teens.

State Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP):³⁵ This program awards grants to states that will teach contraception and abstinence with a target for reaching vulnerable youth such as homeless youth or those in foster care.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Parental Consent: Many states allow a parent to consent to their child taking sex education or health classes. This means you can say, “No!” and opt your child out of sex education classes entirely. In addition, if classroom content violates your religious beliefs or rights of conscience, you have the right to opt your child out of specific lessons. Be sure to submit your opt-out to your school officials in writing!

+ NOTE:

Planned Parenthood and other radical groups are fierce advocates of eliminating parents from a child’s sexual decision-making, including the consequences of teen sex. These groups want your child to be able to access contraceptives, birth control, STI treatment, and even abortion without your knowledge or consent. Some state laws allow parents to be excluded from these decisions their child may make.³⁶

Curriculum Review: You have the federal (and often state) right to request a copy of your child’s school curriculum from your local school board of education.³⁷ School districts may also post school curriculums on their websites. School curriculum is usually considered a matter of public record and is required to be released to families, although you may be responsible for copying costs. Take this opportunity to review curriculum for inappropriate content, biased material, or content that contradicts your family’s values. Be prepared to talk with your child about your values and beliefs and what they are being taught.

Lesson Plan Review: You have the federally protected right to review teacher lesson plans and examine textbooks and other supplemental materials (like videos, activities, games, etc.).³⁸ As a courtesy, be sure to give the teacher ample notice you’d like to review their lesson plans or other instructional materials. It is also important to build good relationships with your student’s teachers to make access to content far easier.

Observe Class: You have the federally protected right to observe your child’s class.³⁹ You may need to provide the school notice beforehand. Some schools are actively seeking parents to sign waivers that they will not observe their child’s classroom. You have the federally protected right to do so, even if you’ve signed a waiver and later change your mind.

Interact with Staff: You have the federally protected right to speak with school staff and participate in your child’s learning activities.⁴⁰

+ REAL CLEAR EDUCATION

Eric and Caroline Licwinko grew concerned when they discovered North Hunterdon High School, in New Jersey, would be giving their two sons a survey, which “asks all kinds of prying questions, including gender and sexual orientation and views on racial issues.” They opted their sons out, but the school still gave them the survey.

Caroline Licwinko states, “They are data mining and psychologically profiling our kids. The questions they are asking are absolutely inappropriate in a school setting. Schools have sold our children’s privacy to a data analytics company that is tracking attendance, behavior, and family’s financial status.”

REAL CLEAR EDUCATION⁴¹

Opt-Outs for Surveys and Assessments: Federal law requires schools allow parents to opt their children out of surveys and assessments that contain invasive or deeply personal questions about your child’s sexuality; gender identity or expression; sexual experiences; moral, religious, or political beliefs; emotional or psychological problems; income level; immigration status; or criminal behavior and more! Often this opt-out must be in writing.

Parental Notification: One U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that only about 69% “of high schools notify parents or guardians before students receive instruction on human sexuality topics.”⁴² Most states require parents to be notified prior to the start of sex education, health, or other related classes. (This notification does not apply if the “sex education” topic is brought up in another class, like social sciences.) Check with your school to find out if they must notify you before your children receive human sexuality instruction. Schools do not have to notify you about LGBT curriculum content or if there will be content that violates your family’s religious beliefs.



KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Often the school environment has led to courts limiting the rights of students. When it comes to protecting your child from comprehensive sex education, most of the rights and responsibilities rest with parents and the schools. Here are some protected rights your child has:

- » *The state cannot require students to act in a manner that violates their religious beliefs. If your child objects to classroom content because of their personal religious beliefs, help them submit a letter to the school in writing with their objections.*
- » *Your child has the right to express their beliefs in the classroom, provided they are not doing it at an inappropriate time or in a disruptive manner. Your child should never be censored, disciplined, or experience other negative consequences for expressing their beliefs or opinions. This right is protected under the First Amendment as Free Speech.*
- » *The right to Free Speech also includes the right not to speak, i.e., the right to be silent. So, children cannot be forced to say things that violate their faith or conscience. For example, a child cannot be forced to use transgender pronouns or promote abortion in a classroom assignment. This right does apply to both verbal and written speech and sometimes actions.*

“ Your child should never be censored, disciplined, or experience other negative consequences from expressing their beliefs or opinions.

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Be sure to read all materials your child's school sends home and check your school and district websites. The school or school board sending a note home or posting on their website is often enough for the school to say they have “notified” you about content. Also, don't be afraid to look over what books, pamphlets and other resources your student might be checking out from the school library or receiving from teachers.

Be proactive in monitoring resources and information your child's school uses and produces. Read all your child's homework assignments, scan their textbooks, and ask them about their day and what they're learning in detail. What you learn can make you breathe easier or alert you that you might need to take more steps to protect your child. Don't forget to ask about movies that may have been shown in class, resources available in the nurse's office, and more.

Connect with other like-minded parents and review material together. Another parent might catch something you miss. And other parents can check out what's happening in higher grades — so you are aware of what your child will encounter in upcoming grades.

Ask the school to inform you if they will have any outside speakers or assemblies. Schools have been known to bring in Planned Parenthood, Drag Queens, protestors, or other activists pushing controversial materials.

Form good, open relationships with your child's teacher, school counselors, assistant principal and principal. Meet with teachers and the school principal regularly and ask them to notify you when there may be content taught that could cause you concern or when they plan to have outside speakers come into the school. Meet with them again if you or your child's boundaries are violated or your rights are not respected. At times, open communication and good relationships just aren't enough, and you might need to take more serious action.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

ABOUT SEXUALITY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND MARRIAGE

We believe that parents — not schools or the government — hold the responsibility for informing their children and communicating their values about sexuality, relationships, and marriage. Yet parents often feel uncomfortable and fearful about broaching these subjects, which means many children will learn about them from the media, entertainment, schools, and friends. It's important to be intentional about sharing your values and beliefs with your children in an ongoing dialogue and relationship.

Your children will be heavily influenced by the first person who talks with them about these topics or the first entertainment, media, or social media they see addressing these issues. So you want to be the one leading the conversation with them about marriage, healthy relationships, being made in God's image as a boy or a girl, and other key issues. Here are some specifics to keep in mind:

1. START AN ONGOING CONVERSATION.

We suggest starting early with sexuality education, beginning with simple concepts for younger children. Focus on the Family has developed an easy-to-use guide for parents, ["The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education."](#) The booklet gives basic goals and guidance for each age level. In the first three years of life, for example, parents should mainly focus on bonding with their young child, helping the child to realize he is a boy or she is a girl, and teaching proper references for body parts. Parents can also begin teaching their children about privacy and safety, helping them start developing healthy boundaries.

From ages three through seven, the guide suggests continuing those basic goals but building on them. Parents should teach children their bodies are good, explain God's design for marriage and family, and teach children more about healthy relationships. Parents can talk more about being a boy or being a girl, explaining that while they are distinct, both are good, both are created in the image of God, and both should be valued

and respected. Parents can continue building on early lessons about privacy and safety, explaining that our bodies are good and providing guidance about how to protect them.

Parents who provide this solid foundation can go deeper and talk more with their children as they move into adolescence about changing bodies, sexuality, anatomy, and reproduction. Starting with simpler concepts makes moving into these more advanced areas easier. Because parents know their children well, they can gauge their child's development and move ahead at a pace that's best for the child. "The Talk" also suggests more resources for parents as they provide their children with a healthy sexual education.

2. ASK YOUR KIDS QUESTIONS.

As your children grow and develop, ask them questions about what they're hearing and learning at school and church, from friends, entertainment, books, and online resources. Maintain an ongoing dialogue with your kids. Let them know, too, that as they grow, they'll encounter ideas that are different from what your family believes, and tell them you want to discuss and explore what they hear in other places. Explain that even though we disagree with people on important issues, we can still show them kindness and respect.

3. HELP YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE ADOLESCENCE.

["Launch Into the Teen Years"](#) is a helpful resource for parents of pre-teen adolescents between the ages of nine and twelve. The resource is not just about sexual development. Although it does include this, it teaches pre-teens about building a healthy identity, developing good relationships, and dealing with fluctuating emotions. The curriculum, which includes videos, a parents' guide, and a workbook, discusses how to make and keep friends, cope with bullies, and deal with technology, providing help for parents as they talk with their children about these sensitive topics.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD

IN SCHOOL HEALTH ROOMS, CLINICS, AND COUNSELING OFFICES



+ ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dan and Jennifer Mead sued the Rockford School District in Michigan after school employees — including a counselor and a social worker — began treating their daughter as a male. Dan Mead writes, “The people we considered partners in our efforts had, months earlier, decided to socially transition our daughter, using a boy’s name and male pronouns with her at school without our knowledge or consent. They hid their actions by referring to her only by her real name when talking to us and carefully removing any reference to a male identity in records they shared with us.”⁴³

SCHOOL HEALTH CLINICS AND NURSES OFFICES

School health rooms, clinics, and counseling offices can be conduits for gender ideology and other controversial ideologies involving abortion, contraception, vaccinations, and more. Some schools only have school nurses who care for minor cuts and injuries, dispense prescription medications, provide health assessments, and may provide referrals to outside care. Other school districts provide full-blown health-care clinics, writing prescriptions for medications and covering all medical and mental healthcare needs of a student.⁴⁴

According to the School-Based Health Alliance, as of 2022, 3,900 school-based health centers were active across the country,⁴⁵ offering both in-person and telehealth care, with 77% of the clinics providing reproductive health services including contraceptive provision or counseling; pregnancy testing; or sexually transmitted infection prevention, testing, or treatment, respectively.⁴⁶ The organization reports that school health centers and clinics receive funding from a variety of sources, including federal agencies, state governments, private foundations, local governments and school-system funding.⁴⁷

As far as school counselors are concerned, virtually every school has counselors who can offer mental health care treatment to your child — including serious situations involving suicidal thoughts, addiction, bullying, sexual activity, pregnancy, and gender-identity struggles. School counselors can also refer students to outside health-care providers, such

as addiction programs, abortion-counseling, and clinics that provide opposite-sex hormones. In some instances, schools do not have to inform parents about these referrals.

+ NONCONFORMING POLICIES

At least 1,062 school districts have “Transgender/Gender Nonconforming Policies” that allow schools to hide a child’s sexual identity confusion from parents, covering more than 10.85 million students, reports Parents Defending Education. The report includes districts in 39 states, but the organization warns that the list is not comprehensive.

The policies mean that school counselors, health clinics, teachers, and administrators can work with students struggling with sexual identity confusion to “change their gender,” without parental notification or consent.⁴⁸

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

School nurses, healthcare clinics, and counselors may give advice and recommendations — or worse, referrals and treatments — to your child that contradict your family values and religious beliefs. Parents should look out for controversial care, which might promote radical, liberal ideology, like the “healthiness” of same-sex relationships, transgenderism, abortion, and controversial drugs that can cause early abortions (like Plan B and Ella). If a school has a full health clinic, it is likely able to write prescriptions for pills (e.g., the abortion pill or cross-sex hormones) or implant IUDs without your express consent or even your knowledge. These clinics can and do provide students with Planned Parenthood resources or referrals, treat your child for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and coach your child on gender identity and sexuality.

When it comes to mental health care, a counselor could be treating your child for suicidal thoughts, providing therapy that affirms and encourages a child’s unwanted same-sex attraction or gender-identity struggles, or providing referrals for addiction programs, abortion services, or cross-sex hormone treatment — all without your knowledge and consent. In fact, in some of these scenarios, state and even federal law may require the counselors to keep this information from you to protect your child’s medical privacy. This is why it’s imperative you know exactly what kind of care your child might receive under a school’s health program.

+ EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Registered nurses at Evanston Township High School told reporters that the school's health center "offers pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection testing, as well as contraception, including the morning-after pill, free to students." They have also "worked with students to help them find abortion care, if that is what they are seeking.

While the nurses "explain other options, such as carrying the pregnancy to term and adoption," they also "help provide resources for students to use parental notification judicial bypass programs and abortion funds, like the Chicago Abortion Fund, that offer financial assistance."⁴⁹

HOW CAN SCHOOLS DO THIS?

Most parents will sign a general consent form for their child's medical care and/or mental healthcare at the beginning of the school year. But this form often does not begin to inform parents about all the "care" their child might receive, nor do these consent forms clearly signal to parents the sheer scope of their consent. As far as financing, most school-based health clinics are funded out of the school's budget and/or through the state Medicaid program. This means you may never see a bill or receive notice of the details of care your child is receiving. This is why it's important you know the scope of care the school's nursing/clinic and counseling office provides and what your consent means.



KNOW THE FACTS

Read all paperwork regarding school healthcare very carefully. Pay close attention to packets and forms that come home at the beginning of the year, which often include medical consent forms. Some forms might have an itemized list of what kind of care you consent to if you sign, but generally, the forms will have much broader statements regarding care, making no mention of the more drastic measures a school can take to treat your child.

School-Based Health Clinics/Centers (SBHC) are full-service health clinics with a licensed doctor or R.N. and can even act as your child's primary healthcare provider, treating and diagnosing all your child's physical and mental health needs. SBHC's provide similar care to nurses' offices such as physicals, vision and hearing screenings, and scoliosis screenings — but they can also do much more. SBHC's can write and dispense prescriptions, prescribe and implant contraceptives, provide vaccinations, and more.⁵⁰ Review consent forms for these clinics with particular care.

School nurses, doctors, and mental health counselors will, in most circumstances, be treating your child without your presence. School health staff will often — and are even encouraged to — discuss sensitive personal issues with your child like sexual activity, the use of contraceptives, abortion access, drug use and addiction, and STI treatments.

Although you might provide limited consent for your child to be treated by a school health clinic, just know once a school health clinic decides that a particular treatment is "medically necessary" for your child, this could mean, you, as the parent, have a legal obligation to ensure your child receives that treatment. Religious objections are still constitutionally strong reasons for parents to decide against treatment, but other reasons for objecting may not be.

In an extreme example, an Ohio court took custody away of from parents of their teenage daughter because the parents declined to allow their daughter to be treated with opposite-sex hormones that cause irreversible sterilization and other extreme irreversible bodily changes. The Court ruled these hormones were necessary care for the daughter and

placed the daughter in the care of her grandparents, who would allow the daughter to take these hormones.⁵¹

Parents have a duty to provide care for their child in emergency situations. They also have an obligation to follow the advice of doctors treating their child and dispense prescribed medication if it would substantially benefit their child. In some states, parents can get a religious exemption from treatment if the treatment would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs (e.g., if receiving a vaccination would violate one's religious beliefs). However, some states do not allow religious exemptions for specific conditions or treatments.

This is only to say that if you choose to have your child seen by a school nurse or doctor, you might also be obligated to follow certain treatment recommendations.

Schools have a general duty to aid and protect their students and provide a generally safe environment for them. If a child experiences an emergency medical situation, the school must take action to help the child (like providing first aid) or get immediate help (like calling an ambulance). The school does not have to obtain parental consent first because, in an emergency, time is of the essence.

Yet, many school districts are defining "emergencies" in broader and broader situations to keep parents in the dark, such as deeming a child's mental health regarding gender dysphoria or an unwanted pregnancy an "emergency" where the school can refer the child to a gender resource clinic or abortion clinic without parental knowledge or consent. It is always good to limit your consent to these services in writing at the beginning of the year. You can also request that if the school treats your child in an emergency, they notify you of their actions to help your child as soon as possible.

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW:

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act): This federal law protects individuals' medical privacy. HIPAA allows parents to access their child's private medical records so long as access does not violate other state or federal laws. For example, if your child can consent to their care or is being treated for STIs, addiction, or serious mental health concerns, you may not be able to access your child's medical records. Also, if you provide consent that your child can have a confidential relationship with the school medical staff, you might not be able to have access to your child's records.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive order telling every federal agency to review their regulations, guidance, and policies so that "sex discrimination" laws include "gender identity" and "sexual orientation."⁵² The Department of Education and other agencies are releasing rules so that it is illegal for any group — including schools — receiving federal funds to "discriminate" based on these attractions, behaviors, or identities.⁵³

§ RELEVANT STATE LAWS:

+ POLICY VIOLATES PARENTS' RIGHTS

"All persons, including students, have a right to privacy, and this includes the right to keep one's transgender status private at school. Information about a student's transgender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth constitutes confidential, personally identifiable, and medical information. Disclosing this information to other students, parents, or third parties may violate privacy laws, such as the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as constitutional privacy protections."

MODEL SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY ON TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS. CREATED BY GLSEN (FORMERLY THE GAY, LESBIAN, AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK) AND THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY.⁵⁴

Check your state's consent laws. Some states allow minors to consent to their own medical care in exceptional circumstances. For example, the majority of states allow minors to consent to their own medical care if they are married, legally emancipated, or seeking treatment for addiction/STD/HIV treatment, pregnancy care, access to contraceptives, and certain types of mental healthcare.

State laws vary regarding the ability of minors to consent to medical and mental health care without parental knowledge or consent. Some states allow children as young as 12 to make these important decisions without their parents' involvement.⁵⁵ Thirteen states and the District of Columbia allow minors to procure abortions without any parental consent, so SBHCs, counselors, and social workers can work with abortion providers without your knowledge.⁵⁶ Remember that these state laws are subject to change depending on legislative and gubernatorial election outcomes.

While some states are pushing back against President Biden's executive order and agency mandates, many states and school districts use them to give sexual orientation and gender identity protected status.⁵⁷ Other states use this federal mandate to teach about these issues — to children as young as kindergarten. They work to "protect the privacy" of those struggling with these issues, based on these nondiscrimination laws, by mandating that notification from parents be withheld when their children struggle with these issues.

In addition, many states and municipalities have passed laws adding "sexual orientation, gender identity, and "pregnancy or related status" (which includes abortion) to nondiscrimination laws — including in education. They then use these laws to promote transgenderism and homosexuality and to exclude parents from these aspects of their children's education and school counseling and health care.⁵⁸

+ NOTE:

If your child is receiving services through Title X (family planning) or Medicaid, you most likely cannot access your child's private medical records.⁵⁹

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you choose to sign a consent form for your child to receive medical care from a school nurse or clinic, you have the right to limit the scope of health-care you consent to based on your personal, moral, and ethical beliefs. For example, “I consent to my child being treated for minor cuts and scrapes, but for anything further, I require the school to get my express consent.”

You have the right to know who provides medical services to your child unless state law has other restrictions. (For example, some states do not allow healthcare providers to release information regarding pregnancy healthcare for your child.) However, suppose your state legally allows your child to consent to their own healthcare in some situations (like prenatal care or addiction counseling). In that case, this information cannot be released to parents without your child’s consent.⁶⁰

You have the right and legal duty to provide necessary medical care for your child. This may seem obvious, but it’s important to note that licensed healthcare professionals have a lot of power in deciding what care is “necessary.”

Usually, necessary care includes care to prevent your child from experiencing serious harm. This becomes important if the professional’s idea of “necessary care” and “harm” differs greatly from your own. If there is a disagreement, a healthcare official can file a complaint with the state, and a court can override a parent’s decision and require treatments for a child.⁶¹

You have the right to refuse treatment for your child that isn’t mandated by law or considered “medically necessary.”

You have the right to talk with school officials about your child’s treatment and share your concerns or questions. Don’t hesitate to inform health-care staff or other school officials, calmly and respectfully, if you believe your parental rights have been violated (such as your child being treated without your consent). These are serious issues that demand a swift resolution. Ensure clarity on your expectations and boundaries for your child’s treatment and submit these to your school officials in writing.

Schools often distribute surveys to students regarding sexual activity, identity, mental health problems, illegal activity, religious affiliation, income, and more. The school must notify you in advance of these surveys and obtain your consent, although parents have reported surveys being distributed without their knowledge. You have the federally protected right to opt your child out of taking these surveys.⁶²

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Parents **cannot** consent to medical treatments that might violate their child's constitutional right to bodily integrity or reproductive privacy. For example, parents cannot consent to have their child's organs removed for organ donation, sterilization procedures for their child, or the termination of a pregnancy without court intervention.

In some states, **minors** are given the legal right to consent to certain types of medical care. In these instances, your child can obtain care without your knowledge and/or consent.⁶³

Some states allow minors who are deemed sufficiently mature (i.e., in possession of the ability, capacity, and motivation to make their own informed medical decisions) to consent to their own medical care. Often, a doctor will make this determination, or at other times, it might be the court.⁶⁴

Minors have the right to consent to abortion access without your knowledge or consent in some states. In **every** state, a minor has the right to seek permission from a court **instead** of their parents. Keep in mind that abortion providers are all too happy to walk your child through the court process.

You have the right to make medical decisions on behalf of your child without the consent of your child's other parent unless a court order has said otherwise or in circumstances that involve removing life-sustaining treatment from your child.

In some states, minors have the right to consent to substance abuse or mental health treatment without parental consent. And in many states, your child may have the right to refuse substance abuse and mental health therapy, even if you request it.⁶⁵

More than 100 municipalities, cities, and 26 states have laws prohibiting mental health professionals from counseling minors struggling with unwanted homosexuality or sexual identity confusion — even if the minor **wants** help and support to deal with these issues.⁶⁶ Therapists in these states may only help a child embrace homosexuality or transgenderism — even if their religious and moral beliefs oppose these identities and behaviors. Such bans threaten religious freedom and free speech of minors, as well as parents' rights.⁶⁷

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

When signing a consent form, you can limit the scope of your consent. You can write on the form directly or submit a separate letter that the school/SBHC does not have your permission to, e.g., write prescriptions or provide referrals to outside agencies without your specific notification and consent.

Ensure your child's primary care doctor is someone you and your family can trust, who will respect your beliefs. If your child's primary care is through their school, build a relationship with their school nurse/doctor and make your beliefs and desires clear. It's always a good idea to put your religious beliefs and what they mean for your expectations regarding medical care in writing, and a good school will record this information in your child's file.

Ask to review materials your school health staff may distribute to students in group sessions, classroom activities, or assemblies before these activities. School health staff often update students throughout the year on their services or provide pamphlets or flyers with advice, recommendations, and even referrals for some of the controversial issues we've covered here. If you object to the content, you might be able to excuse your child from these activities. At the very least, you can talk to your child ahead of time if you know what's coming.

Be aware school health clinics may also distribute surveys to students that can be intrusive and sexually explicit (e.g., such as asking a student if they have had sex and what kind). The federal government pays schools for each survey they return, so they are incentivized not to notify parents before distributing them. However, they are required by law to notify you. If you are uncomfortable with your child taking surveys regarding sex, sexuality, and/or gender identity, submit your opt-out to school officials in writing.

Be sure to read all materials your child's school sends home and check your school and district websites. The school or school board sending a note home or posting

on their website is often enough for the school to say they have "notified" you about content. Also, don't be afraid to look over what books, pamphlets, and other resources your student might be checking out from the school library or receiving from teachers.

Be proactive in monitoring resources and information your child's school uses and produces. Read all your child's homework assignments, scan their textbooks, and ask them about their day and what they're learning in detail. What you learn can make you breathe easier or alert you that you might need to take more steps to protect your child. Don't forget to ask about movies that may have been shown in class, resources available in the nurse's office, and more.

Connect with other like-minded parents and review material together. Another parent might catch something you miss. Other parents can check out what's happening in higher grades so you are aware of what your child will encounter in upcoming grades.

Ask the school to inform you if they will have any outside speakers or assemblies. Schools have been known to bring in Planned Parenthood, drag queens, protestors, or other activists pushing controversial materials.

Form good, open relationships with your child's teacher, school counselors, assistant principal, and principal. Meet with teachers and the school principal regularly and ask them to notify you when content may be taught that could cause you concern or when they plan to have outside speakers come into the school. Meet with them again if your or your child's boundaries are violated or your rights are not respected. At times, open communication and good relationships just aren't enough, and you might need to take more serious action.

“ It's always a good idea to put your religious beliefs and what they mean for your expectations regarding medical care in writing.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

Today's youth often deal with difficult issues such as depression, anxiety, bullying, sexuality, relationships, identity, and worldview questions. Schools may even guide your children in a different direction than you would, without informing you and without your consent. Listed below are a few basic ideas you could consider using to connect with your child:

1. INVEST CONSISTENT TIME FOR RELATIONSHIP AND CONVERSATION

It's easy in our busy world to let important things slide — including your connection with your children. We encourage parents to be intentional about giving time, attention, affirmation, and love to their children as they grow. Be a safe person for your children to talk with: Ask questions, listen well, and encourage them to speak freely.

2. HELP CHILDREN WRESTLE THROUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO THEY TRUST AND WHY

Your children will hear messages from entertainment, social media, friends, and their school that oppose traditional faith and values. Help them connect with trusted mentors, role models, coaches, and friends who can speak into their lives. Safe and trusted family members, youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, teachers, and other parent — who clearly share your values — are key allies in helping your children grow and learn.

3. BE INVOLVED IN THEIR LIFE

Adolescents and teens often begin talking more with others and less with parents about serious issues they may be struggling with. Staying connected with your children also means connecting with their friends and other adults who know and love them. These relationships can be helpful if you find your child is struggling with serious issues. Their choices in who they spend time with can also give you important information about what may be going on in the deeper places of who they are. In other words, help your child learn that they will become more like the five closest people in their life.

4. TALK ABOUT THE TOUGH STUFF

As your children grow, have age-appropriate individual and family conversations about the difficult issues we face in the world. Be sure to sign up for Focus on the Family's age and stage content to be sent to you as you navigate the realities and challenges that come with your child growing up. Go to www.mykidsage.com to register. It's free!

Explain that they will sometimes hear messages that can be confusing and don't match up with God's truth. These don't change God's clear design for human identity, relationships, marriage, and life. Explain what God's Word says, and present factual information and solid arguments as you pass on your beliefs to the next generation. Remember that beliefs and worldview are best transferred within a trusting relationship. Research affirms that parents are the most influential in a child's development and faith formation when they learn how to balance warmth and sensitivity with boundaries and limits. You can learn how to live this out in your parenting by taking our free parenting assessment at <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/7traitsassessment/>



FOCUS ON THE FAMILY HAS RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU AS YOU NAVIGATE DIFFICULT ISSUES:

- » [Alive to Thrive — a preventative approach to suicide](#)
- » [Counseling Consultations and Referrals from Focus on the Family's Christian Counselors Network](#)
- » [Launch into the Teen Years — Resources to help you guide your 8 — 12-year-old child into early adolescence](#)
- » [Parenting Articles and Resources — Biblically based, research-based guidance and information to strengthen your parenting and your child](#)
- » [When Transgender Issues Enter Your World: How Christians can respond with compassion, courage, truth](#)
- » [Parenting Questions and Answers](#)
- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education — Healthy sex ed for every age and stage of your child's development](#)



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