

FACT SHEET

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The vast majority of Americans support sexuality education and believe that young people should be given information to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Even though they believe that abstinence should be a topic in sexuality education, they reject abstinence-only-until marriage education that denies young people information about contraception and condoms.

The statistics in this *Fact Sheet* on *Public Support for Sexuality Education* will help advocates for comprehensive sexuality education programs work to ensure that public policies keep pace with the desires of the American people.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHING SEXUALITY EDUCATION

- 93 percent of Americans support the teaching of sexuality education to high school age students, and 84 percent support sexuality education for middle/junior high school age students.¹
- 87 percent of Americans favor including sexuality education in the public high schools.²
- 86 percent of registered voters favor sexuality education for teenagers in public schools.³
- 85 percent of adults agree that sexuality education should be taught in the public schools.⁴
- 66 percent of registered voters are in favor of a proposal to increase efforts to provide age-appropriate sexuality education in the public elementary schools.⁵
- About four in 10 Americans think sexuality education should be required for all students, regardless of their parents' wishes, with 48 percent of African-American parents holding this view.⁶
- 54 percent of adults believe that eliminating sexuality education in schools would lead to more teenage pregnancies.⁷
- 89 percent of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) presidents in North Carolina agree that family life education should be taught in public schools.⁸
- 88 percent of adults in California support teaching age-appropriate sexuality education in schools.⁹
- 58 percent of principals say that parents are "very supportive" and 36 percent say that parents are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹⁰
- 72 percent of principals say that the school board or school administrators are "very supportive" and 23 percent say that the school board or school administrators are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹¹
- 69 percent of principals say that teachers are "very supportive" and 28 percent say that teachers are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹²
- 55 percent of principals say that students are "very supportive" and 37 percent say that students are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹³
- 32 percent of principals say that religious leaders are "very supportive" and 38 percent say that religious leaders are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹⁴
- When asked if politicians are supportive of their school's sexuality education program, 21 percent of principals say that politicians are "very supportive," 29 percent say that politicians are "somewhat supportive," and 39 percent say that they "don't know."¹⁵
- 33 percent of principals say that community members are "very supportive" and 41 percent say that community members are "somewhat supportive" of their school's sexuality education program.¹⁶

SUPPORT FOR CONTENT

When adults were asked their views on the appropriate grade to teach specific subjects in sexuality education programs. The results were:

	7-8 Grades	9-10 Grades	11-12 Grades
Puberty	82%	94%	96%
Abstinence	79	91	95
HIV/AIDS	76	92	96
STDs	74	91	96
Love/Dating	63	86	92
Contraception/ Birth control	59	84	91
Condoms	58	82	90
Sexual Orientation	56	76	85
Abortion	40	68	79 ¹⁷

- If sexuality education is taught in high schools, 94 percent of Americans think it should include the basic facts of human reproduction; 92 percent think it should tell young people who are sexually active to use protection, such as condoms, to prevent pregnancy and disease; 74 percent think sexuality education should discuss knowing when you are ready to have sexual relations; 74 percent think it should include how to talk about sexual intercourse with a partner; 68 percent think it should tell young people not to have sexual intercourse before marriage.¹⁸
- When asked to name the topics to include in a high school sexuality education program, Americans said: STDs (92 percent), AIDS (92 percent), biology of reproduction (90 percent), teen pregnancy (89 percent), birth control (87 percent), premarital sexual relations (77 percent), nature of sexual intercourse (72 percent), abortion (70 percent), and homosexuality (65 percent).¹⁹
- Overwhelming majorities of Americans support the schools' role in teaching the biology of sexual reproduction and pregnancy. 95 percent say this is an appropriate area for public schools, and 78 percent would start this before high school.²⁰
- 97 percent of Americans say schools should teach students about the dangers of STDs, including AIDS, with 86 percent wanting this to begin before high school, 51 percent in junior high school, and 35 percent in elementary school.²¹
- 96 percent of all Americans support providing AIDS information in high schools.²²
- 97 percent of parents support providing AIDS information in high schools.²³
- 55 percent of voters agree with supporters who emphasize the importance of providing scientific information to young people regarding sexuality and health issues.²⁴
- 89 percent of Americans believe that it is important for young people to have information about contraception and prevention of STDs and that sexuality education programs should focus on how to avoid unintended pregnancies and STDs, including HIV and AIDS, since they are such pressing problems in America today.²⁵
- 83 percent of adults believe that, whether or not young people are sexually active, they should receive information to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancies and STDs.²⁶
- 81 percent of adults think sexuality education courses should teach about abstinence and give teens enough information to help them prevent unplanned pregnancies and the spread of STDs if they do decide to have intercourse.²⁷
- 56 percent of Americans think AIDS education should be required with 71 percent of African-American parents backing this approach.²⁸

- 51 percent of Americans support allowing schools to supply students with phone numbers of gay support groups.²⁹
- 56 percent of Americans feel “using models of nude men and women to demonstrate the correct use of condoms and diaphragms” is appropriate.³⁰

CALIFORNIA

- The majority (52 percent) of adults in California believe that age-appropriate sexuality education should begin by the sixth grade.³¹
- When adults in California were asked about the content of sexuality education in high schools, 99 percent said discussions should include information on AIDS and other STDs, 97 percent said discussions should include information on human reproduction, and 85 percent support high schools discussions with teens about how to talk about sexuality with a partner.³²
- 84 percent of adults in California believe young people should receive specific instruction about preventing pregnancy and STDs.³³
- 93 percent of adults in California believe sexually active teens should be encouraged in school-based sexuality education courses to use protection to prevent pregnancy and STDs.³⁴

INDIANA

- Adults in Indiana were asked if Indiana public high schools should educate teenagers about how to use condoms to prevent the spread of HIV. 50.1 percent strongly agree, 25.3 percent somewhat agree.³⁵

NORTH CAROLINA

- 91 percent of PTA presidents in North Carolina support instruction about abstinence and the use of condoms and birth control methods in the family life education curriculum.³⁶
- PTA presidents in North Carolina believe that topics related to family, communication, and child and sexual abuse should be introduced in grades K-3.³⁷
- PTA presidents in North Carolina believe that topics related to puberty, reproductive system, hygiene, pregnancy, STDs, and life management skills should be introduced in grades 4 and 5.³⁸
- PTA presidents in North Carolina believe that topics related to sexual behavior, including contraception and preventing STDs, should be introduced in grades 6 to 8.³⁹
- PTA presidents in North Carolina believe that topics related to marriage, prenatal care, and parenting should be introduced in grades 9 to 12.⁴⁰

- More than 82 percent of PTA presidents in North Carolina agree that students should learn positive and negative aspects of abortion, adoption, single parenting, and married parenting.⁴¹

SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE HOME

- 27 percent of registered voters agree that sexuality education belongs in the home and should be taught in accordance with parents' own values.⁴²
- 65 percent of adults in California say that encouraging parents to talk openly about sexuality and birth control with their children would be "extremely effective" in reducing teen pregnancy.⁴³

SUPPORT FOR CONDOM AVAILABILITY

- 53 percent of all Americans think that school personnel, such as nurses and counselors, should make condoms available to sexually active young people.⁴⁴
- 57 percent of adults think that high school health clinics should provide young people with condoms and other forms of birth control if students ask for them.⁴⁵
- 55 percent of Americans believe it is appropriate for schools to distribute condoms to students.⁴⁶
- 21 percent of Americans support making condoms available to middle school students, and 55 percent would allow high schools to distribute condoms.⁴⁷

INDIANA

- Adults in Indiana were asked if condoms should be made available to teenagers in the Indiana public schools without parental permission. 26.7 percent strongly agree and 27.1 percent somewhat agree.⁴⁸
- Of adults residing in Indiana, 36 percent strongly agree and 25.9 percent somewhat agree that the three major television networks should air commercials about condoms as one way to help prevent the spread of HIV.⁴⁹
- Of adults in Indiana, 48.8 percent strongly agree and 25.9 percent somewhat agree that the federal government should promote condom use as a way to prevent the spread of HIV.⁵⁰

NORTH CAROLINA

- 52 percent of PTA presidents in North Carolina agree that teen health clinics should make contraceptives and condoms available.⁵¹

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