

**Personal Health** includes information regarding personal fitness and lifetime activities, cardiovascular health, personal hygiene (including oral health), vision and hearing, positive health habits and choices (sleep, rest, relaxation, and recreation), aging, personal wellness plans, growth and development, and care of human body systems and functions.

**Prevention and Control of Disease** focuses on causes, transmission, prevention, early detection, and treatment of diseases and disorders (including STD/HIV); immunizations and vaccines; lifestyles and diseases; eating disorders; genetic disorders; neurologic diseases; and medical care services.

Florida law requires the benefits of abstinence be stressed to students when sexual health education is taught. The benefits of abstinence can be stressed within abstinence-only, abstinence-plus, or comprehensive sexual health programs. Districts choose the appropriate curriculum based on the needs of students and to reflect local values and concerns.

### *What can parents do to prevent teen pregnancies and STDs?*

Parents are the students' first teachers and play a critical role in influencing the values and behaviors of their children. According to data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, teens (91%) say it would be much easier for them to delay sex and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open and honest conversations about these topics with their parent(s)/guardian(s). However, many parents do not feel knowledgeable, comfortable, or skilled enough to teach their children about sexuality and preventing pregnancies, HIV/AIDS or

STDs. That's why sexual health education classes in Florida schools are important. Only 1-3% of parents choose to take their children out of these classes when they are offered at school.<sup>3</sup>

For more information concerning how to talk to your child about these issues, visit the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Web site at <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/parents/default.aspx>.

<sup>1</sup> Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2009 Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Healthy Youth! Student Health and Academic Achievement," [http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health\\_and\\_academics/](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/); accessed on January 27, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Pease, J. Sex Education in Florida Schools. University of Florida News, Monday, November 5, 2007

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# Sexual Health Education in Florida: Definition, Need, and Requirements

FOR PARENTS 2010



## *What do we mean when we say “sexual health education” or “sexuality education”?*

Sexual health education addresses reproductive health, interpersonal relationships, affection, body image, gender roles, and disease and pregnancy prevention options. Lessons that would be considered part of age appropriate sexual health education may be taught K-12, and should be designed to meet the needs of students at the various age and grade levels. The specific content of curriculum and instruction is determined by local school district policy.

## *Why do we need sexual health education including STD/HIV and teen pregnancy prevention education?*

Results from the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show:

- 51% of students in grades 9-12 (365,700) reported having had sexual intercourse at least once.
- 12% of males and 4% of females (approximately 42,800 and 15,250 students respectively) had intercourse for the first time before age 13.
- 37% of 9th graders (approximately 73,800 students) have had sexual intercourse at least once.
- 63% of 12th graders (approximately 96,200) have had sexual intercourse at least once.

- 22% of 12th graders (approximately 33,100) have had sex with multiple partners (four or more during their lifetime).<sup>1</sup>

These data show a significant number of students in Florida are putting their health at risk by possibly becoming pregnant or by contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Why should parents, educators, and policy makers be concerned? Academic achievement is strongly linked to student health. Research shows students who engage in health-risk behaviors have lower grades, lower test scores, poorer school attendance, and their ability to pay attention in class is lower compared to other students.<sup>2</sup>

We should also be concerned because according to Florida Department of Health 2008 data:

- Florida ranks 12th in the nation in number of teen pregnancies.
- Approximately 66% of STD cases occurred among individuals between the ages of 15-24.
- In Florida 15% of new infections of HIV are among persons under the age of 25.

## *Do parents want sexual health education? Do students think sexual health education is important?*

The 2008 Florida Child Health Callback Survey (Florida Department of Health, Bureau of

Epidemiology) shows:

- 76% of parents would allow their child to participate in grade level appropriate sexuality education.

Data from the 2009 YRBS show high school students support sexual health education in schools:

- 88% of Florida high school students think it is important or very important for schools to help students address current issues of concern such as drug abuse, violence, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, abuse, and suicide.

## *Is sexual health education required instruction in Florida Schools?*

Yes, through Comprehensive Health Education which is required under Florida State Statute 1003.42 (2)(n) Required Instruction (parents can choose to opt their children out of the sexual health component of comprehensive health education). Ten core content areas are included in the definition of comprehensive health education: community health; consumer health; environmental health; family life, including an awareness of the benefits of sexual abstinence and the consequences of teen pregnancy; mental and emotional health; injury prevention and safety; nutrition; personal health; prevention and control of disease; and substance use and abuse. The three components defined below include aspects of sexual health education:

**Family Life** includes instruction on family structures, roles and responsibilities, gender roles, sexual stereotypes, marriage, divorce, sexuality education, parenting, physical and sexual abuse, building family relationships, child abuse, the family life cycle, family planning, and heredity.

# *Academic achievement is strongly linked to student health.*