2020 Texas Focus: Self-Determination
Saturday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020
8:30 AM-10 AM
Health and Sexuality Panel - Let's Talk About Sex... in the 21st Century

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Developed for
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Outreach Programs
10 Reasons to Teach Sex Ed

1. **Because Sex Ed is not being taught**
According to a 2016 TFN study: 58.3% of Texas public schools teach Abstinence-only curriculum and 25.1% of Texas public schools teach no sex education at all.

2. **Just Teaching No Doesn't Help Those Who Will Say Yes**
One of the biggest problems with abstinence-only education is that it denies teenagers the chance to learn about acceptable options other than abstinence. Given that no form of sex education has been shown to effectively convince teenagers not to have sex, this is a significant problem. Presumably, parents and educators want adolescents to be as healthy and happy as possible. One would hope that would be true even if those adolescents aren't managing to conform to the standards of behavior that adults would consider ideal.

3. **Just Because You Have a Raincoat Doesn't Mean It's Going To Rain**
There's a silver lining to studies that say abstinence-only doesn't encourage kids not to have sex. What is it? All the other studies that say providing condoms in schools doesn't make kids more promiscuous. Over the past 20 years, numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that teaching comprehensive sex education in schools doesn't have the downside most people are afraid of. In other words, providing condoms in schools doesn't encourage adolescents to start having sex earlier, or even more often. Having those condoms available does seem to encourage teens to use them, but only if they would be having sex anyway.

4. **1 in 2 High School Students Have Had Sex. Which One Is Yours?**
A large number of teens are sexually active. According to the Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey, or YRBSS, in 2015, 41 percent of high school students had had sex at least once. Eleven-and-a-half percent had had four or more sexual partners. Fifty-seven percent of sexually active students had used condoms the last time they had sex,
but only 18 percent had used birth control pills. Furthermore, one-fifth of sexually active high school students had used drugs or alcohol before the most recent time they had sex.

5. **Sex Ed Doesn't Encourage Kids to Have Sex**
   
   Sex education doesn't encourage kids to have sex. Just like abstinence-only programs, good comprehensive programs teach students that abstinence is the only surefire way to prevent pregnancy and STDs. The difference is that these programs also give students realistic and factual information about the safety of various sexual practices, and how to improve the odds.

6. **Values about sex can be taught at home, but facts should be taught at school**
   
   As parents, we have the duty and right to pass our values about sex onto our kids. If part of your family’s values system is waiting until marriage for sex, that’s fine. But schools should be teaching programs that prepare all kids to have healthy and happy lives, and give them facts that will help keep them safe. Nothing about sex education prevents parents from teaching their kids their standards for moral behavior. If anything, having them learn the facts at school frees parents to focus on explaining their own personal moral beliefs and behavioral expectations.

7. **The More Kids Know, the More Likely They Are to Say No**
   
   Teenagers aren't stupid. When a teacher tells them that only abstinence can protect them from the dangers of STDs and pregnancy, they know they're being lied to. At the very least, they know they're being misled. Giving adolescents an accurate picture of the risks of different types of sexual behavior can help them make informed decisions about sex. The most effective sex education programs tend to be the ones that try to steer teens away from specific activities that are particularly high risk.

8. **Sex Ed Encourages Abstinence, Not Ignorance**
   
   What do teenagers do when they haven't been given accurate information about sexual risks? They have oral sex, or even anal sex, instead of vaginal intercourse. In particular, many teenagers don't see oral sex as incompatible with abstinence. That's true even though oral
sex can transmit several STDs. Abstinence-only education sometimes encourages students to abstain from sex without ever telling them what sex is. In contrast, when comprehensive sex education is taught in schools, it may encourage teens to make more informed decisions before participating in alternative sexual behaviors. Without enough information, those are behaviors that teens may falsely assume are safe.

9. Why is it Important?

Sex is a natural part of life, and it happens with or without sex education. As young people grow up, they face important decisions about relationships, sexuality, and sexual behavior. The decisions they make can impact their health and well-being for the rest of their lives. Young people have the right to lead healthy lives, and society has the responsibility to prepare youth by providing them with comprehensive sexual health education that gives them the tools they need to make healthy decisions. The weight of scientific evidence finds that abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM) programs are not effective in delaying initiation of sexual intercourse or changing other sexual risk behaviors. AOUM programs, as defined by U.S. federal funding requirements, inherently withhold information about human sexuality and may provide medically inaccurate and stigmatizing information. Thus, AOUM programs threaten fundamental human rights to health, information, and life. Young people need access to accurate and comprehensive sexual health information to protect their health and lives.

10. Sex Ed falls clearly into the ECC and within the roles and responsibilities of the vision professional--Social Interaction and Self-determination Skills

Social interaction skills include awareness of body language, gestures, facial expressions, and personal space. Instruction also includes learning about interpersonal relationships, self-control, and human sexuality. Almost all social skills are learned by visually observing other people. Instruction in social interaction skills in school, work, and recreational settings is crucial. Having appropriate social skills can often
mean the difference between social isolation and a fulfilling life as an adult.

Self-determination includes choice-making, decision-making, problem solving, personal advocacy, assertiveness, and goal setting. Students with visual impairments often have fewer opportunities to develop and practice the specific skills that lead to self-determination. Students who know and value who they are and who have self-determination skills become effective advocates for themselves and therefore have more control over their lives.

As vision professionals our role will vary depending on the student and parent consent level. We can support access to instruction when provided within the school setting or when instruction is not provided, per family request. Vision professionals can also help to identify appropriate adults or team members to support student learning for individual or small group instruction or to help increase a family’s comfort level with instruction by sharing rationale provided here, as well as examples of curricula and possible lessons.

References

http://txcampaign.org/sex-ed-texas/
https://www.verywellhealth.com/support-comprehensive-education-schools-3133083
https://advocatesforyouth.org/resources/fact-sheets/sexuality-education-2/
November 7, 2019

Dear Parent:

Beginning this semester, your child will be participating in a Sex Education course designed for adolescents. Throughout the course, we address issues such as interpersonal relationships, physical development, body image, gender identity, promotion of sexual health, anatomy, reproduction, and prevention of disease. We believe that as the students gain knowledge in each of these areas, they will increase their safety. To use a familiar phrase—Knowledge is Power. In order for students to best be able to protect themselves, they need information, clarification, and vocabulary to better understand theirs and other people’s behaviors and to describe any issues that may arise throughout their lives.

We emphasize that the only way to protect oneself from pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection is through abstinence; however, we also address information related to the prevention of pregnancy and STIs, so the student has the information to best be able to make an informed decision regarding his/her sexual choices. We hope to help establish a foundation of positive and healthy sexuality across the lifespan. During the course, we also encourage discussions about the wide-spectrum of beliefs on sensitive issues and stress respect and tolerance. As we often discuss how families may feel differently about certain issues, we value family involvement.
Within the course, we also encourage students to ask questions—any question that may arise related to the topic. Frequently, students have questions but are too afraid or embarrassed to ask, so the questions remain unanswered or their friends and the Internet are filling in the gaps. The students can ask their questions in class, via email, or in the Sex Ed anonymous question box. We want to mention this as some of the questions can be rather blunt. The questions are answered candidly and with tact—we want to ensure the students’ questions receive a straightforward answer from a trusted adult.

We understand that these topics and issues are sensitive; trust that our goal is to increase knowledge in order to increase safety. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child participating in this class, please call or email me, and I will be happy to discuss them with you. I hope I can ease any misgivings through a more thorough discussion of class content and structure.
Health & Sexuality Panel - Resources

Curriculum, etc.

**UNIHUSHED**

**FLASH**

**Boyfriends + Girlfriends: A Guide to Dating for People with Disabilities**

**Health Education Materials & Models** (or find realistic models/materials via Amazon)

Conception, Pregnancy, Birth

**On the Rag: A Guide to Menstruation** | Scarleteen

**Human Reproduction: A Seafarer's Guide** | Scarleteen

**Get With the Flow: All About FAM** | Scarleteen

**Getting Pregnant** | American Pregnancy Association

**Your Developing Baby** - American Pregnancy Association

**Unplanned Pregnancy** - American Pregnancy Association

**Labor and Birth** - American Pregnancy Association

**Birth & Beyond** - American Pregnancy Association

**Fetal development week by week** | BabyCenter

**Cesarean Section** | C Section | MedlinePlus

**Childbirth** | Stages of Labor | Effacement | MedlinePlus

**Labor And Delivery Child Birth** | Manipal Hospitals - YouTube

**Natural Unmedicated Birth** - with original sound - YouTube

http://txcampaign.org/sex-ed-texas/

Trauma-Informed Sex Ed

**An Inside Look at Trauma-Informed Practices** | Edutopia

**Helping Students Who Have Experienced Trauma** | Edutopia

**Resources for Responding to Trauma and Tragedy** | Edutopia
Sex & Sexuality

Meet the Sexualitree | The Sexualitree
Intersex Society of North America | A world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgery

Gender & Orientation

Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Anatomy & Physiology

Innies & Outies: The Vagina, Clitoris, Uterus and More | Scarleteen
Innies & Outies: The Penis, Testes and More | Scarleteen

Unplanned Pregnancy and Parenting
An Overview of Abortion Laws | Guttmacher Institute
The Young Motherhood Project - YouTube
Abortion ProCon.org

STIs
What Are STDs? | Sexually Transmitted Diseases Information
Sexually Transmitted Diseases - Information from CDC
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) - NHS
Can I Get Pregnant, or Get or Pass On an STI From That? | Scarleteen
PSA: Get Yourself Tested for STD's! - YouTube
Do condoms prevent all STI's?? - YouTube
Get Yourself Tested PSA - YouTube
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Violence & Consent

Home - loveisrespect
T.E.A.R - Teens Experiencing Abusive Relationships
Home | The National Domestic Violence Hotline
Teen Dating Violence Awareness - Ending Teen Dating Violence
Love is Respect PSA Winner - YouTube

Harassment, Assault, Rape

Polaris
RAINN | The nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization
National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)
National Human Trafficking Hotline
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Figure 1 TSBVI logo

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