

Comprehensive Sex Education Fact Sheet

The Missouri Legislature should build on the progress of 2015's passage of the [Internet Safety Sex Education Law](#) by requiring that voluntary sex education courses include information on both abstinence and the benefits of contraception. Current law does not reflect advances in sex education evaluation. Local school districts are banned from selecting which trained sex education professionals to invite into their classrooms. Improving access to high-quality, comprehensive, inclusive sex education in schools should be a shared goal in Missouri.

We know comprehensive programs work. Research has identified highly effective sex education and HIV prevention programs that affect multiple behaviors and/or achieve positive health impacts. Behavioral outcomes have included delaying the initiation of sex, as well as reducing the frequency of sex, the number of new partners, the incidence of unprotected sex, and/or increasing the use of condoms and contraception among sexually active participants. ([Advocates for Youth](#))

Medical organizations, parents, and the public support comprehensive sex education. Eighty-six percent of Missourians support teaching comprehensive sex education in schools, according to a Missouri poll conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates. Leading public health and medical organizations all stress the need for sex education that includes messages about abstinence and provides young people with information about contraception for the prevention of teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Supporters include: the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Institute of Medicine Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, the American Nurses Association, and the American Public Health Association.

Abstinence-only programs are dangerous and inaccurate. Current Missouri law allows schools to teach abstinence-only sex education. Researchers who have evaluated abstinence-only programs have found disturbing results, including increased sexual activity with less use of protection and contraception. The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine recently declared that “abstinence-only programs threaten fundamental human rights to health, information, and life.” ([Advocates for Youth](#))

Investing in sex education prevents unintended pregnancy AND makes good fiscal sense. The teen birth rate in Missouri declined 42% between 1991 and 2010. According to the [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#), the progress Missouri has made in reducing teen childbearing saved taxpayers an estimated \$217 million in 2010 alone compared to the costs they would have incurred had the rates not fallen. **For every dollar invested in family planning services, taxpayers save approximately \$7.** ([Guttmacher](#))