

Position Statement

Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (Inc)

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Purpose

Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia (SH&FPA) is a federation of seven Australian state and territory organisations working in the field of sexual and reproductive health. This statement provides a shared position that informs our work with children, young people and adults in the area of sexuality education.

Why comprehensive sexuality education?

It has been demonstrated internationally that comprehensive sexuality and relationships education programs:

- Increase knowledge about reproduction, pregnancy, sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and prevention methods¹ and provide the knowledge and skills base for sexual and reproductive health for life²;
- Are likely to assist in reducing vulnerability to sexual abuse³, by providing accurate information and awareness about the body, sexual development, and appropriate boundaries of physical intimacy in family and social relationships;
- Do not promote earlier or increased sexual activity and in fact can delay the onset of sexual activity, and reduce the number of sexual partners;⁴,
- Increase the use of contraception and safe sex practices; and⁵
- Are more effective when programs promote both postponement of sexual intercourse and the use of protection when sexually active, than programs that promote abstinence alone⁶.

Statement of intent

SH&FPA will:

- Advocate for the maintenance and expansion of funding to enable quality comprehensive sexuality and relationships education programs to be delivered in Australia;
- Engage in debates about sexuality and relationships education and provide research-based information to decision and policy makers;
- Develop, implement, and promote best practice approaches in the delivery of comprehensive sexuality and relationships education programs;
- Continue to support the evaluation of comprehensive sexuality and relationships education programs to ensure continuous improvement and effectiveness; and
- Collaborate with other groups and networks in fulfilling these objectives.

¹ Card et al (1999); Eisen et al (1990); Kirby (1997)

² Baldo et al (1993)

³ Briggs & Hawkins (1997)

⁴ Grunseit et al (1997); Kirby (1997)

⁵ Franklin et al (1997); Kirby (1997); Collins (2001)

⁶ Baldo et al (1993); Card et al (1998); Franklin et al (1997); Grunseit et al (1997)

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Statement of principles

- Sexuality is an integral part of life and encompasses sexual behaviour, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationships and reproduction.
- Sexuality can be experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.
- The experience of human sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.⁷
- Sexuality and relationships education is a lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs and values about identity, relationships and intimacy⁸.
- Sexuality education addresses the biological, socio-cultural, psychological and spiritual dimensions of sexuality.

SH&FPA affirms that comprehensive sexuality and relationships education is underpinned by the following values and beliefs:

- Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living and people are sexual from birth to death;
- Sexuality includes physical, ethical, spiritual, psychological and emotional dimensions;
- Every person has dignity and self worth, and individuals express their sexuality in varied ways;
- Respect and recognition for the diversity of values and beliefs about sexuality that exist in a community is important;
- Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative;
- Parents, family and carers are the primary sexuality educators of children and young people;
- Premature involvement in sexual behaviour poses additional risks above those of other sexual decisions and actions;
- All persons have the right and the obligation to make responsible sexual choices;
- Individual and society benefit when children are able to discuss sexuality with their parents and/or other trusted adults;
- Young people explore their sexuality as a natural process of achieving sexual maturity;
- Abstaining from sexual intercourse is the most effective method of preventing pregnancy, sexually transmissible infections, including HIV/AIDS;
- Young people and adults who are sexually active need access to and information about health care services.

Approved April 2006.

⁷ World Health Organisation http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.html#3

⁸ SIECUS <http://www.siecus.org>

PositionStatement

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