

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN TENNESSEE

ADVOCATING FOR HOLISTIC CHANGE TO CURRENT FAMILY LIFE SEX EDUCATION

CREATED BY: DANIEL VARELA, PAOLA MENDEZ, DENISE ANGEL,
AND KARISSA GOODMAN





THE CURRENT POLICY



TENNESSEE CODE ANN. S49-6-1301 ET SEQ.

- Sexual education not required until county exceeds 19.5% pregnancies/1,000 teenagers, ages 15-17, in the county.
- “Family-life curriculum” includes abstinence, basic moral values, and consequences from intimacy.
- Curriculum must be approved by local school boards.
- Students can opt out with parental written consent.



We are advocating for change to this policy to implement a **holistic** sexual education in public high schools which includes education on healthy relationships, sexual assertiveness, contraceptives, consent, as well as abstinence.





WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?



SOCIAL ISSUE

- Tennessee is ranked the **10th** highest state for teenage pregnancy rates (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2016).
- **44%** of Latina's become pregnant before the age of 20 (Aparicio, 2016).
- Hispanic and Black teenage pregnancy rates are ***more than doubled*** that of their White counterpart (CDC, 2019).
- **5,600** teens from the ages of 15-19 in TN have an **STI** (CDC, 2017).



DEFINITIONS

Abstinence-based or abstinence-centered:

An approach that promotes sexual risk avoidance, or primary prevention,

Comprehensive sex education:

A medically accurate, age appropriate curriculum or intervention (Planned Parenthood, 2019)

Family life education:

An abstinence-centered sex education program that builds a foundation of knowledge and skills (LexisNexis 2019)





HISTORICAL CONTEXT



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- 1920's-30's: WWI soldiers with venereal disease
- Emergency sex education
- 1960's: Sexual Revolution Era
- California ban SIECUS materials in sex education classes
- American Association of Sex Educators and Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) formed





CURRENT CONTEXT



CURRENTLY HAPPENING

- This bill has not been drafted.
- Dolores Gresham was the sponsor to the amendments that were made to this State Bill in 2012.
- In the beginning of 2019, 32 states and Washington DC introduced 79 sex education bills
- 55 bills introduced in 32 states and DC (2019 Guttmacher Institute.)
- 11 states require sex education to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ students



CURRENT SEX EDUCATIO N

Accuracy of
nationally
implemented
sex education

- 26 states have instruction that is age appropriate,
- 13 states are considered to be medically accurate
- 8 states have material on family life education that is presented with race and gender bias
- 2 states have information implemented based off religiosity



PAST AMENDMENTS

An ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, relative to family life instruction was to be taken effect July 1, 2012.

- age in which the teenagers had to be for the family life programs to be taught
- definitions of important words that are found in the bill



TN-EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hamilton County:

- Senator Bo Watson (R)
- Senator Todd Gardenhire (R)

Tennessee House Standing Committee for Education:

- Mark White (R) is Chair
- Kirk Haston (R) is Vice-Chair

Tennessee Senate Standing Committee for Education

Dolores Gresham |
R-Chair

Brian Kelsey |
R-1st Vice Chair

Raumesh Akbari
D- 2nd Vice-Chair





OUR PROPOSAL



PROPOSED CHANGE

- This project strives to promote a more comprehensive sexual education curriculum.
- Changes to this include incorporating education on healthy relationships, contraceptives, sexual assertiveness, STI prevention, as well as the benefits of being abstinent in Tennessee high schools.
- Another aspect of this proposed change is educating parents, schools, and the community on the benefit of having a more age appropriate comprehensive sexual education in Tennessee.



REASONS TO SUPPORT

- Lower statistics of teenage pregnancy rates in Tennessee.
- Decrease the rate of students contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Students will be correctly educated on safe sex practices.
- Increase in awareness of unprotected sex among teenagers.
- Teach sexual assertiveness at a younger age.
- Students will be provided on what a healthy relationship should look like.



POTENTIAL OPPOSITION

- Many people believe the following when it comes to comprehensive sexual education:
 - Children will develop early sexual thoughts and actions.
 - This curriculum infringes on religious beliefs.
 - Sex education promotes sex before marriage.
 - This goes against cultural traditions and norms.



JUSTIFICATION

Having no sex education has shown little to no effect on reducing teen pregnancy rates in TN. If children are not learning about sex at home or in school, then where are they learning about it? The lack of education leads to high rates of sexual assault, unintended pregnancies, as well as other health complications. Children are entering adulthood with an unclear picture of what safe sex is and what a healthy sexual relationship looks like.



QUICK OVERVIEW

- The United States ranks first among developed nations in rates of both teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- The State of Tennessee does not require any type of sexual education until the teenage pregnancy rate in a county surpasses 19.5% per 1000 teenage females.
- Out of all 50 States, Tennessee is the 10th highest for teenage pregnancies and births.
- This includes teaching about abstinence, preventative measures, sexual assertiveness, and healthy relationships.



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