

COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED FACT SHEET

RECENTLY, THE TENNESSEE LEGISLATURE OVERHAULED THE LAWS ABOUT SEX ED

Sex Education is a part of the Family Wellness Curriculum in the state of Tennessee. Recently, our legislature changed the laws about what could be taught to students. The new laws require ABSTINANCE BASED education for all counties with a teen pregnancy rate of 19.5 per 100,000 or higher. It also penalizes organizations that teach Comprehensive Sex Ed within school systems. Shelby County is included in this category, but our parents, teachers and students say that ABSTINANCE BASED education is not what they want or need.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

ABSTINANCE BASED SEX ED teaches that sex is only appropriate in marriage and that there are severe social, physical and psychological penalties for engaging in sex outside of marriage. Discusses physical development and abstinence as the only tactic for avoiding pregnancy and STIs.

COMPEHENSIVE SEX ED (CSE) includes age-appropriate, medically accurate information on a broad set of topics related to sexuality including human development, relationships, decision making, abstinence, contraception, and disease prevention. CSE provides students with opportunities for developing skills as well as learning.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT COMP SEX ED WORKS AND OUR STUDENTS NEED IT!

COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED (CSE) has been shown to *reduce incidence of unprotected sex* and *delay first sexual activity*. It is also *linked to declines in teen pregnancy*, and increased likelihood of using contraception, as well as decreasing the likelihood that first sexual encounters are forced encounters.

has surveyed parents, teachers and students. Students report that they don't have all the information they need to make safe decisions about their bodies. Parents want their children to receive full and accurate health information, and teachers have expressed a lack of knowledge about what they can and can't teach their students.

THE FACTS ABOUT SHELBY COUNTY

- Teen Pregnancy rates have decreased, however, **STI infection rates have increased.**ⁱ
- Shelby County's **rates of HIV Infection, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia are more than double** the national rates and teen pregnancy rates are 40% higher than the national rates. This means that **more students are at risk for HIV/STIs.**
- In 2013, **> 50% of SCS students reported having sex** with nearly 25% having sex with 4+partnersⁱⁱ
- **80% of teen moms in Shelby County live in extreme poverty**ⁱⁱⁱ (households earning < \$10,000) and will **depend on public assistance for at least 13 years of their child's life.**^{iv}
- **In fact, teen moms who miss out on college and a bachelor's degree lose over \$1.4 Million dollars in income across their lifetime workforce participation.** For our community, this means more women of color will be pushed into poverty.

- Only **30% of parents feel comfortable talking about sexual and reproductive health** with their children.
- **90% of youth** believe that they **do not have all the information they need** about sex and their bodies. Tennessee’s insistence on not having Comprehensive Sex Education means that the **most vulnerable populations in our community, African Americans, Latinos, the poor and women will suffer greatly** in addition to the socioeconomic factors they already face. Indeed, across the state counties with large vulnerable populations, Knox, Davidson, Shelby and Hamilton are all negatively impacted by the requirement for ABSTINANCE BASED Sex Ed.
- Shelby County Schools have **received funds from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to educate students** in low income/high risk schools and ZIP codes on STI Prevention, however State Restrictions and forced ABSTINANCE BASED education means that **only private or charter school students are receiving this life saving information.**

GOAL

[REDACTED] wants to equip students, parents and teachers with scientifically accurate information, empower students to make healthy choices, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn about their bodies, prevent unplanned or unwanted pregnancies and STI’s and to confidently make decisions about their health and relationships.

We want to bring Comprehensive Sex Education to all students in Tennessee.

*We want **students to be involved** in the decisions that ultimately affect their long term health and wellness in order to reduce sexual health disparities among poor youth and youth of color.*

*We want **culturally sensitive** Comprehensive Sex Education curricula that supports positive social outcomes for students.*

*We want **parent focused** Comprehensive Sex Ed in order to reduce teen pregnancies and STI transmission by making resources available to adults in the community that teach them how to talk to young people about sex and reproductive health.*

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance* 2014. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2015

^{iv} Ciscel, David. *The Economic Impact of Teen Pregnancy in Memphis/Shelby County. TN.* Memphis: Memphis Teen Vision; 2015