The background features a collage of images. At the top, there are protest signs with text like 'TRANS LIVES MATTER' and 'El futuro es queer'. Below these are photos of diverse groups of people, including students and adults, some sitting at tables and others standing. The design is overlaid with large, semi-transparent circles in shades of green, orange, and yellow.

**The Michigan Radical
Sex Ed Initiative's**

Guide on Implementing
Queer- and
Trans-Inclusive
Sex Education
in Michigan

About the National LGBTQ Task Force

The National LGBTQ Task Force works to secure full freedom, justice, and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people. For over 40 years, we have been at the forefront of the social justice movement by training thousands of organizers and advocating for change at the federal, state, and local level.

The Task Force devotes its work to striking a balance between sustained local work, which often focuses on statewide campaigns around non-discrimination efforts, and broader work, which includes influencing federal policy directions and working closely with federal agency employees to ensure equitable and timely implementation of policies that affect LGBTQ people. The impact of this work involves ensuring that grassroots efforts at the local and state levels prioritize building racially and economically diverse staff, boards, and volunteer teams that specifically engage people of color, transgender people, people of faith, and LGBTQ allies in these efforts. As one of its key policy priorities, the Task Force is committed to advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice for all, which includes advocating for sex education that is comprehensive and inclusive.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to our 2018-2019 If/When/How Fellow Bridget Schaaff who helped research, write, and prepare material for this toolkit; Taryn Gal and Brittany Batell from Michigan Organization for Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH), Jennifer Driver from Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), and Laurie Bechhofer from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for reviewing the toolkit and providing invaluable edits; and Audrey Denson for her amazing graphic design skills used to design this toolkit.

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Letter

FROM THE

Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative

Dear activists,

The Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative is a group of young leaders who experienced firsthand the failings of the current sex education system. As LGBTQ+ people whose bodies and minds have been hurt by sex ed, we are driven to bring reform to this oppressive education system and create change for our communities.

As a group, we want a world where all bodies are honored and there is no profit from another's insecurities or trauma. We want a community that has dismantled the heteronormative hierarchy, and where there is acceptance for all physical bodies and identities. The social change that could come from sex education that is comprehensive is limitless, and we must continue to advocate for it.

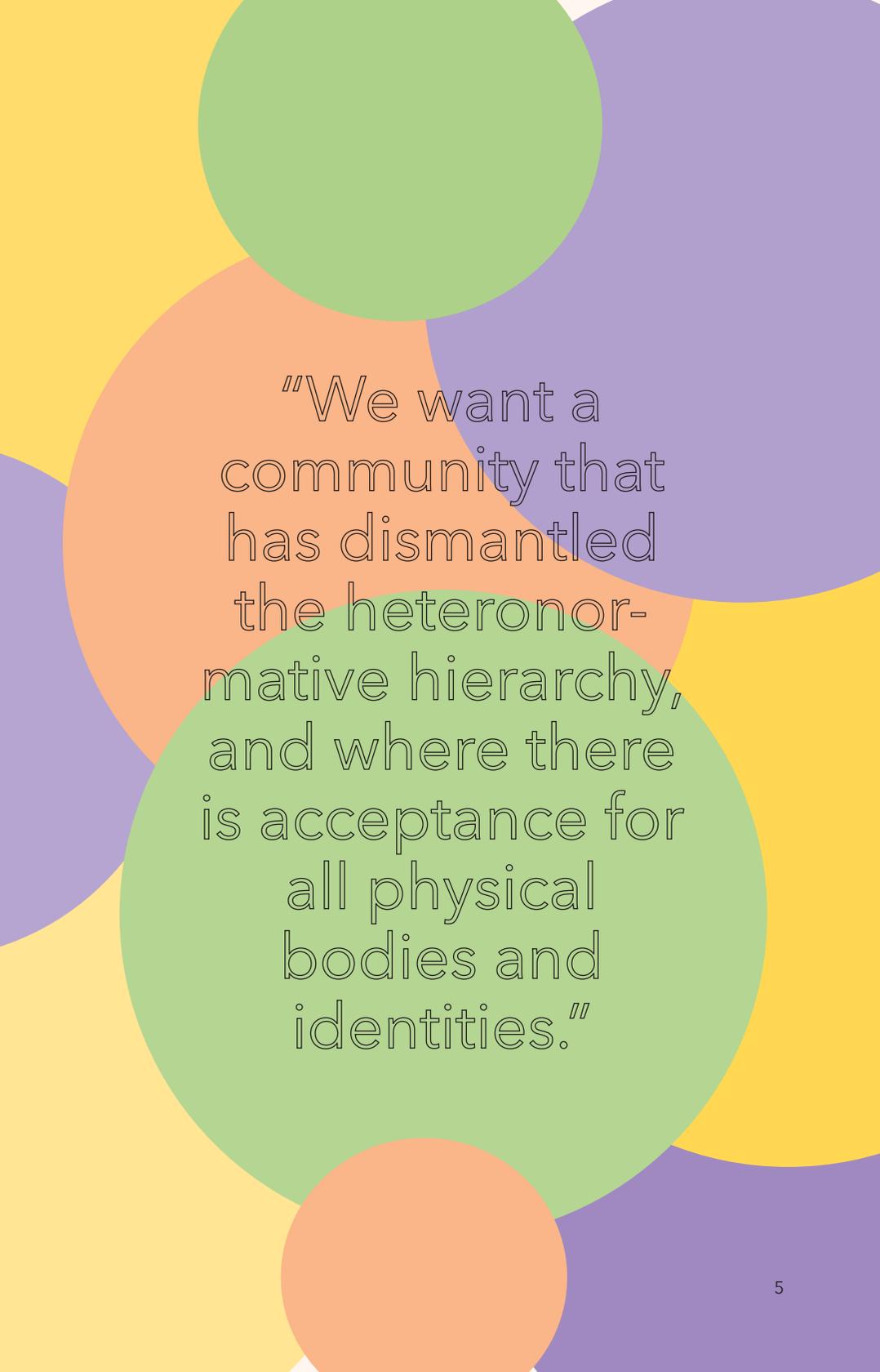
The Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative came together as a group to host their first ever Sexual Health Leaders Conference, where this toolkit was launched. As a collective, we had been eagerly awaiting this opportunity to organize an event uniting others who are passionate about sexual health. We brought advocates and activists across Michigan together for this conference because we are passionate about humanity.

There is a need to create understanding and respect despite human differences. We want happier, more confident people living out better lives with healthier relationships with others and their own bodies. It is important that our queer and trans stories, too often erased, are passed down for generations to come. Fundamentally, we do this work for our past, present, and future selves.

From this toolkit, we hope you find just as much inspiration and excitement as we did in working as a collective to change conversations around sex ed.

Much love,

The Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative



"We want a community that has dismantled the heteronormative hierarchy, and where there is acceptance for all physical bodies and identities."

Members of the Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative



Kateri Boucher was raised in Rochester, NY, and now calls Detroit home. She graduated from Hamilton College in 2017 with a degree in Sociology and a fresh post-grad buzz-cut. She spent a year in Boston with the Quaker Voluntary Service program, where she lived in intentional community and worked on grassroots organizing and fundraising. She currently works for Geez magazine, a small quirky print publication that focuses on "contemplative cultural resistance" (look it up!). She loves road tripping, dancing, and asking all the hard questions. And she's deeply grateful to have been a part of this team!



Forrest Hosea is a queer, nonbinary person who has been engaged in sex-positive activism for about four years now. Having attended a private, Catholic, all-girls school, their sex education consisted of STI fearmongering and an all-too-uncomfortable abstinence presentation for their school. They still remember the "save it until marriage" card they signed! They are excited to have comprehensive sex education include queer and trans bodies in the conversations.



Emani Love is a Detroit native, artist, organizer, and Black Trans Woman. She is the director of Wage Love Apothecary, which is a cross-cultural healing justice initiative and network.

Makenzie Marts is a writer, feminist, and sex educator. She's been teaching, leading workshops, and organizing LGBTQ community spaces since 2014. She has a bachelor's in sociology and gender and women's studies from Western Michigan University, and believes anti-capitalism is the only framework for holistic sexual wellbeing.

makenzie

Facilitator



Spencer Genrich is an aspiring social worker with a passion for advocacy. What brought her to MIRSEI is her dream of making comprehensive sex ed programs accessible to everyone. If you know Spencer, you know she will happily talk your ear off about her favorite topics, consent and sexual identity! When she's not advocating for social justice, she keeps busy as a child developmental researcher at WSU and as a dance instructor/choreographer/performer for dance schools and community theaters in the southeastern Michigan area.



Drea (she/they) is a Detroit native. They recently graduated from Eastern Michigan University and are currently back in Detroit for their gap year. She loves learning about and being a part of a community that houses so many identities. Makeup is a passion of hers, so she is always down for a trip to Ulta. They are super excited about meeting new people and making new connections!



Taissa Morimoto (she/they) is honored to have had the opportunity to dream up the project that made the Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative possible. They are the group's facilitator and have hosted trainings and webinars to help build leadership among the members of the Michigan Radical Sex Ed Initiative. Taissa is Policy Counsel at the National LGBTQ Task Force, where she works on Census, sex education, and criminal and economic justice advocacy.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following definitions are a non-exhaustive list of terms that advocates may come across in doing LGBTQ sex education advocacy. For more definitions and information please check out the Creating Change 2019 program packet at www.bit.ly/cc19program as well as SIECUS' Community Action toolkit at www.bit.ly/SIECUSCAT.

Abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM): Sex education programs that emphasize abstinence from all sexual behaviors outside of heterosexual marriage. If contraception or disease-prevention methods are discussed, these programs typically emphasize failure rates. In addition, they often present marriage as the only morally correct context for sexual activity. Also referred to as "Sexual Risk Avoidance" programs. (SIECUS)

Aromanticism or Aro: A romantic orientation where a person experiences little to no romantic attraction and/or has no desire to form romantic relationships. Like asexuality, it exists on a spectrum which involves a range of identities characterized by varying levels of romantic attraction. This spectrum is called aromantic spectrum. Aromantic people can identify with

any sexual orientation along with their aromantic identity, or they may just identify as aromantic.

Asexuality or Ace: A sexual orientation where a person experiences little to no sexual attraction to anyone and/or does not experience desire for sexual contact. Asexuality is a spectrum, and there are some people who may not fit strictest definition of the word asexual, but feel their experience aligns more with asexuality than with other sexual orientations.

Bisexual: A person whose romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction is towards same and/or different genders.

Gay: A person whose romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction is towards their own gender, most commonly used for men.

Gender nonconforming (GNC) or genderqueer: A term for people whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Intersex: Refers to a person who is born with sexual or reproductive anatomy that does not fit within the sex binary of male or female, encompassing a variety of sex expressions.

LGBTQ: Shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer.

Lesbian: A woman whose romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction is towards other women.

Non-binary: A term used by people who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. This can include people who are agender, genderqueer, and GNC, among others.

Queer: An umbrella term which embraces a variety of sexual preferences, orientation, and habits of those who are not among the exclusively heterosexual and monogamous majority. Although the term was once considered derogatory and offensive, the community has reclaimed the word and now uses it widely as a form of empowerment. Younger generations tend to use the term "queer" for reasons such as the fact that it does not assume the gender of the queer person or the gender of any potential romantic partners, and/or in order to make a political statement about the fluidity of gender.

Sex education: School-based education programs that start in kindergarten and continue through 12th grade and include

developmentally accurate, medically accurate information on a broad set of topics related to sexuality including human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behaviors including abstinence, sexual health, and society and culture. Sex education programs provide students with opportunities for learning information, exploring their attitudes and values, and developing skills. (SIECUS)

Sex education advisory board (SEAB): An entity that is generally tasked with determining the existence, content, and structure of sex education in school districts. Though the roles and structure of SEABs vary by state, many are required to be comprised of students, parents, educators, community health professionals, and local clergy. In Michigan, SEABs establish program goals and objectives for sex education and review materials and methods of sex education instruction.

Sexual orientation: A person's identity in relation to whom they are attracted to; a person's actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or asexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct components of a person's identity.

Transgender: A broad term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned gender at birth. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, hence "transgender people," but "transgendfers" or "transgendered" is often viewed as disrespectful.)



If you care about LGBTQ rights ...

Then you should care about SEX EDUCATION.

The Case For Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Most young people spend a majority of their upbringing at school, making it an influential and critical space for development. In the U.S., more than 95% of young people ages 7–17 are enrolled in school and will spend over six hours in a classroom each weekday during the most formative years of their lives. Schools are uniquely positioned to not only provide formal sex education, but also improve the health and well-being of young people.ⁱ

Sex education provided in schools is instrumental in preventing negative health outcomes. Sex education that is comprehensive offers young people the strongest opportunities to make lifelong, healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.ⁱⁱ This type of education is free of stigma and shame and is inclusive of all young people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or ethnicity.

LGBTQ Rights Include Access to Sex Education

Describing *cisgender** and heterosexual identities and relationships as the “norm” in classrooms has a real impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) young people. Outright anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and language that reinforces the gender binary can have a severe psychological impact on a person who identifies as LGBTQ, but an absence of LGBTQ inclusivity can similarly promote stigma and harmful stereotypes. Unfortunately, when it comes to sex education in schools, LGBTQ youth experience both.

Only seven states require that sex education and HIV/AIDS instruction in schools be culturally appropriate, or inclusive of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, socioeconomic status, gender identity/expression, or sexual orientation.ⁱⁱⁱ

Similarly, only four states require health education instruction to affirmatively recognize different sexual orientations and gender identities. This impacts young LGBTQ people and, even more so, young LGBTQ people of color, who are both less likely to have sex education that meets their needs and more likely to experience sexual health disparities.ⁱⁱⁱ

*cisgender (adj.): refers to an individual whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth (sometimes referred to as “biological sex.”)

- **Lesbian and bisexual young women are two to ten times more likely to experience an unintended pregnancy than heterosexual young women.**^{iv}

- **18% of LGB students who identified as multi-racial and 15.5% of white LGB students reported having been forced to have sex, compared to 9.3% of straight students who identified as multi-racial and 5.1% of white straight students, respectively.**^v

- **81% of new HIV diagnoses in 2015 were among gay and bisexual young men ages 13-24 and disproportionately among Black and Latinx GB young men.**^{vi}

- **78% of transgender students in grades K-12 report having been exposed to harassment, 35% to physical assault, and 12% to sexual assault.**^{vii}

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If you care about LGBTQ rights ...

Then you should care about **SEX EDUCATION.**

By Advancing Sex Education, You Are Advancing LGBTQ Rights

Most sex education curricula ignore the needs of LGBTQ youth by only discussing sexuality within the confines of heterosexual marriage. At least 30 states are required by law to stress abstinence during instruction in sex education and only 16 states are required to cover contraceptives.^{viii} At least seven states have laws that are explicitly anti-LGBTQ.^{ix} In fact, a 2015 GLSEN study found that less than 6% of students reported having sex education classes that showed LGBTQ identity in a positive light.^x

Locations set the tone by

Sex education can be one of the few sources of reliable information on sexuality and sexual health for youth. Schools' tendencies to perpetuate negative or "othering" attitudes towards LGBTQ people place them at greater risk of violence and create significant sexual and reproductive health disparities - particularly among young LGBTQ people of color. **Only 11% of LGBTQ youth of color believe their racial/ethnic group is regarded positively in the United States.**^x Additionally, for LGBTQ youth of color, the challenges are exacerbated by the lack of health educators and programs that relate directly to their experiences with LGBTQ- and race-based discrimination.

68% of LGBTQ youth say they hear negative messages about being LGBTQ from elected officials.

Sex Education that is inclusive of LGBTQ young people:

- Affirms young people's right to bodily autonomy
- Ensures LGBTQ young people have a safe and supportive environment that affirms who they are
- Centers the voices and experiences of LGBTQ youth of color
- Rejects abstinence-only-until-marriage programs which promote shame and reinforce stigma
- Reduces experiences of negative mental health outcomes due to prejudice and other biases^{xi}

If You Are An Advocate or Policymaker:

- Read **A CALL TO ACTION: LGBTQ YOUTH NEED INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION** to take immediate, concrete steps.
- Advocate for comprehensive sexuality education programs that honor and respect the rights of young people, providing them with the tools they need to live healthy lives.
- Support federal legislation such as the **Real Education for Healthy Youth Act (REHYA)** and the **Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act (YASHS Act)**.
- Move beyond asking whether a strategy will serve everyone to focusing first on whether it will effectively address the needs of those most likely to be in need (i.e. LGBTQ youth of color).
- Form coalitions with parents, educators, and policy makers to improve sex education in your state and school district.
- Develop sex education policies that align with the **National Sexuality Education Standards**.
- Eliminate funding and/or support for harmful and ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

ⁱ Fisher, Carolyn, et al. Building A Healthier Future Through School Health Programs. Accessed May 28, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/publications/pdf/PP-Ch9.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Bertozzi S, Padian NS, Wegbreit J, et al. HIV/AIDS Prevention and Treatment. In: Jamison DT, Breman JG, Measham AR, et al., editors. Disease Control Priorities in Developing Countries. 2nd edition. Washington (DC): The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank; 2006. Chapter 18. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK11782/>. Co-published by Oxford University Press, New York.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sexuality Information and Education Council of United States. State Laws And Policies Across The United States. (2017, November 5). Retrieved June 28, 2018, from <http://siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=747&documentFormatId=608&DocLinkOrigin=1&CFID=39070021&CFTOKEN=9168de523933cd58-6210CCCF-1C23-C8EB-8007CD42153FEF71>

^{iv} 7 Reasons Abortion Rights Should Matter To Everyone In The LGBT Community Kristina Marusic - <http://www.newnownext.com/roe-v-wade-anniversary/01/2017/>

^v Adolescent and School Health. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed June 26, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/smy.htm>

^{vi} HIV/AIDS. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed June 26, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/age/youth/index.html>

^{vii} The Health and Rights of Transgender Youth Understanding and Support Are Critical for This Highly Marginalized Group. Report. November 2013. Accessed June 28, 2018. http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/the_health_and_rights_of_transgender_youth.pdf

^{viii} SEXUALITY AND HIV/STD EDUCATION LAWS. Report Accessed June 28, 2018. <http://siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=727&documentFormatId=836&DocLinkOrigin=1&CFID=11663457&CFTOKEN=7a639841f0cd4a19-01195D65-1C23-C8EB-8098B21C65B610C6>

^{ix} Laws That Prohibit the "Promotion of Homosexuality": Impacts and Implications. Report. Accessed June 28, 2018. https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN_Research_Brief_-_No_Promo_Homo_Laws_1.pdf

^x Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Giga, N. M., Villenas, C. & Danischewski, D. J. (2016). The 2015 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

^{xi} Growing up LGBT in America HRC Youth Survey Report Key Findings. Report. Accessed June 28, 2018. https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Growing-Up-LGBT-in-America_Report



What are the Current Laws and Policies in Michigan?

Introduction

One way to advocate for sex education that is comprehensive—which centers people of color and is culturally inclusive, LGBTQ-inclusive, inclusive of different abilities, medically accurate, and based in science—is by ensuring that the laws, policies, and curricula in Michigan reflect this definition. To do that, it is important to know the current landscape of Michigan laws and policies related to sex education and HIV/AIDS education.

So what do we mean when we say policy? When state representatives pass a bill, and it is signed into law by the state's governor, it needs to be implemented somehow. Sometimes, because the law impacts a particular sector of society, the law designates a certain agency to implement the law. For example, if a state passes a law to mandate sex education in schools, it would likely direct the State Department of Education to determine all the rules around implementing that law. The rules that the Department of Education sets are called policies, to which we must adhere.

In Michigan, sex education—including family planning,

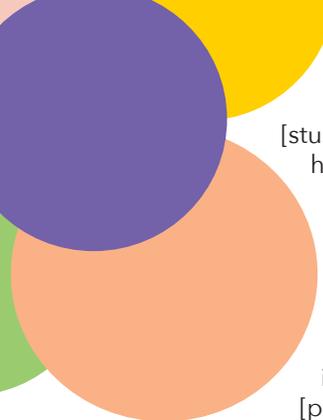
family life education, and sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention—and HIV/AIDS education are governed by different laws and policies. However, there are many similarities between the laws governing the two areas.

What laws and policies exist around sex education in schools?

Michigan state law does not require schools to teach sex education.¹ The law explicitly states that schools *may* offer sex education, and that instruction can include information on family planning, family life education, and STD prevention.²

The Michigan Board of Education, which governs the Michigan Department of Education, adopted the *Policy to Promote Health and Prevent Disease and Pregnancy*, which requires sex education programs offered to be age appropriate, developmentally and culturally appropriate, not medically inaccurate, and based on effective programming.³ The sex education courses must include discussions about healthy dating relationships and refusal skills.⁴ Again, schools in Michigan are not required to teach sex ed, but when they do, the instruction must follow these policies.

The sex education courses must also include discussions of the potential emotional, economic, and legal consequences of sex, including “clearly informing



[students] that having sex or sexual contact with an individual under the age of 16 is a crime punishable by imprisonment, [possibly leading to being] listed on the sex offender registry”⁵

Michigan schools that offer sex education are not required to include a discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in the curricula.⁶ If schools choose to include information on sexual orientation or gender identity, there are no laws or policies surrounding how these topics must be presented.⁷ This means that it is not illegal for a school in Michigan to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity during sex education instruction in a negative or dehumanizing way. Further, abortion is not considered a “method of family planning” and it can’t be taught about as a “method of reproductive health.”⁸

Sex education classes cannot be a requirement of graduation— if offered, they must be offered as an elective.⁹ Further, sex education instruction must be provided by teachers qualified to teach health education and “supervised by a registered physician, a registered nurse, or other person certified by the state board as qualified.”¹⁰ Each district offering sex education program must have a sex education supervisor, who is approved by the Michigan

Department of Education and oversees the program of instruction.¹¹

What laws and policies exist around HIV/AIDS education in schools?

Michigan state law requires schools to provide education on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and to offer it at least once a year at every building level (elementary, middle/junior, senior high).¹² HIV/AIDS instruction can be included in any type of class, (e.g., health class, school-wide assembly, English class),¹³ but it must be taught by health care professionals or teachers specifically trained in HIV/AIDS education.¹⁴ The instruction must also be supervised by a physician, nurse, or state board-certified person.¹⁵

HIV/AIDS courses must include information about avoiding “the risk behaviors that are most likely to result in HIV infection.”¹⁶ The course must reinforce that abstinence is the only certain way to avoid HIV/AIDS but should also include instruction about other ways to reduce the risks of HIV.¹⁷

What rules apply to both sex education and HIV/AIDS education?

According to Michigan law, both sex education and HIV/AIDS education classes “shall stress that abstinence from sex

is a responsible and effective method of preventing unplanned or out-of-wedlock pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease and is a positive lifestyle for unmarried young people.”¹⁸ This law perpetuates “the misconception that marriage is the only way to prevent unintended pregnancies, HIV, and other STIs. However, this is a misguided belief that contributes to both the stigma and isolation of married people who do have unintended pregnancies or contract HIV/STIs and the fallacy that unintended pregnancies, HIV, and other STIs are nonexistent or disappear in a marriage.”¹⁹

Additionally, schools must notify parents about HIV/AIDS and sex education classes in advance.²⁰ Parents may also review the content of the classes in advance and have the right to observe the classes.²¹ Parents can freely remove their children from any part of the sex education or HIV/AIDS instruction through an “opt-out” policy,²² without penalty.²³ For sex education classes, a parent can also file a request to have their child permanently excluded from sex education classes until the parent submits a written statement that the student is allowed to enroll.²⁴

No school official or school board member can give out any family planning drug or device (e.g., birth control pills or condoms) in school, and they can’t make abortion referrals.²⁵ Schools that violate these policies could lose financial assistance.²⁶

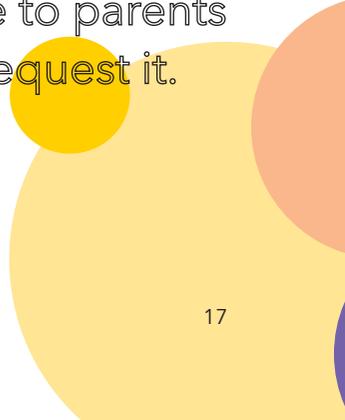
Did you know?

Sex education is not mandated in Michigan schools, but if it is taught in schools, sex education instruction must...

- Be age-appropriate, developmentally and culturally appropriate, not medically inaccurate, and based on effective programming;
- Stress abstinence; and
- Include discussions about healthy dating relationships and refusal skills.

Abortion must not be taught as a method of family planning and teachers cannot give students referrals for abortion services.

Michigan requires schools to make teaching materials related to sex education and healthy relationship instructions available to parents who request it.



How can I effect Sex education Policy Change in Michigan?

From Research to Action

Take a deep breath.

We just went over lots of different laws and policies that govern how sex and HIV/AIDS education should or should not be taught in schools. And it is a lot. But what do we do with all of this information?

This section is designed to give you some pointers on how to use this information to advocate for sex education policy change in Michigan. When reviewing this section and determining how to best organize for change, it might be helpful to keep the following tips in mind:

- Although there are federal and state laws that affect individual schools, the most effective changes often happen on the local level. Since Michigan law does not require sex education to be taught in schools, school

boards and sex education advisory boards have the power to determine whether schools in a district must teach sex ed, the curricula, and many other aspects about the quality and content of the sex education instruction.

- Though there is a lot of local power in determining sex education instruction in Michigan schools, school boards and sex education advisory boards must still follow state and federal laws. This means that it is always important to develop a long-term plan to improve state and federal laws.
- In advocating for changes to state laws for more inclusive sex education, it is paramount to include language requiring reporting from districts in state laws. This would provide an oversight mechanism that would ensure that schools are complying with state laws and that there is no gap in implementing sex education requirements in schools.
- In Michigan, school boards and sex education advisory boards have a lot of power to set rules and content around sex education in schools.

Continue reading below to learn more about how school boards and sex education advisory boards have control over sex education and HIV/AIDS education in Michigan.

Curriculum Approval Process

Introduction

Both HIV/AIDS education and sex education instruction must be formally approved by the district school board of education, or school board, which is a group of people who are responsible for school district operations. For sex education classes, the process requires additional steps. Both processes involve public hearings—meetings anyone can attend to listen and/or share their opinions on the subject matter.

Any HIV or STD instruction offered by a school district must be formally approved, regardless of the:

- class in which it is taught (e.g., health class, school-wide assembly, English class);
- person providing the instruction (teacher, school nurse, guest speaker);
- time of day the instruction is offered (during the school day versus after school); or
- place the instruction takes place (within the building versus off the school premises).²⁷

The formal process for approval requires two public hearings and school board approval.²⁸

Sex Education Advisory Boards

If a school district wants allow sex education classes in their district, the school district must create an advisory board, known as a Sex Education Advisory Board (SEAB).²⁹

Under state law, the school district must establish the terms of service, the number of members to serve, and a selection process for members of the SEAB.³⁰ The school district must include students, parents, educators, local clergy, and community health professionals on the SEAB.³¹ At least half of the SEAB members must be parents of a child attending a school in the district.³² The district must appoint 2 co-

If a school district wants to allow sex education classes in their district, the school district must create an advisory board, known as a Sex Education Advisory Board (SEAB).

chairs to the SEAB, and at least one co-chair must be a parent of a child attending a school in the district.

View a sample application to be a member of a SEAB [here](http://www.bit.ly/2U4YoKc): www.bit.ly/2U4YoKc

SEABs are “responsible for:

- Establishing program goals and objectives for pupil knowledge and skills that are likely to reduce the rates of sex, pregnancy, and STDs[;]
- Reviewing and recommending materials and methods to the board, taking into consideration the district’s needs, demographics, and trends including, but not limited to, teenage pregnancy rates, STD rates, and incidents of sexual violence and harassment[; and]
- Evaluating, measuring, and reporting the attainment of program goals and objectives and making the resulting report available to parents in the district at least once every two years.”³³

In other words, the SEAB makes recommendations to the school board as to what materials and methods should be included in the sex education instruction.

For more information on SEABs, please refer to MOASH’s resource at www.bit.ly/MOASHSEAB.

Public Hearings

SEAB meetings can be members-only or open to the public.³⁴ At public meetings, there should be opportunities for community members to express concerns about the proposed sex education instruction at SEAB meetings.³⁵

After the SEAB makes its recommendations to the school board, the school board must hold two public hearings, at least a week apart, on the recommendations before it can approve them.³⁶

Similarly, if the school board is proposing to change its HIV/AIDS curriculum, the school board must also hold two public hearings and vote to approve the changes.³⁷

Before each hearing, the school board must provide public notice of the time, date, and place of the meeting in accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act.³⁸ Under the Open Meetings Act, the school board or SEAB “must post this notice at its principal office and any other location deemed appropriate. Publishing notice through cable television is permitted. If [it] does not have a principal office, the notice should be posted in the office of the county clerk . . . or the office of the Secretary of State.”³⁹ People may also “request that [the board or SEAB] notify [them] by mail in advance of all noticed meetings,” subject to a reasonable fee for the cost of printing and mailing.”⁴⁰

The meeting should be held at a convenient time or place; they will sometimes be held before regularly scheduled school board meetings.⁴¹ Anyone can attend.⁴²

According to the [Sample Recommendations for Conducting a Public Hearing](#):⁴³

- There should be an opportunity for public comments and a question & answer session during the hearing
- People making comments should be able to speak into a microphone and address the school board, according to a set time limit (i.e. three minutes)
- Speakers should avoid repeating the comments made by other speakers
- Even non-residents of the school district can speak at the hearing

After holding at least two public hearings on the recommendations from the SEAB or on changes to the HIV/AIDS curriculum, the school district can approve the curricula and set its instruction policy.⁴⁴

Action Steps

Use this checklist guide to help you advocate for sex education policy change on the local, state, and federal levels. Though it is not exhaustive, it is designed to help you think through some aspects of effecting policy change. (*Adapted*

from *SIECUS’ Community Action Toolkit*. For more details, visit www.bit.ly/SEICUSCAT)

Getting Ready...

- Research the sex and HIV/AIDS education laws and policies in your:
 - State
 - District
 - School
- Research, reach out to, and collaborate your local, state, and national allies

Tip: think about who may be interested in this issue. Consider the following types of organizations when reaching out to collaborate: Parent Teacher Association/Organization, teacher’s Union, youth-serving organizations, student groups, civic organizations, family planning clinics, HIV/AIDS organizations, health care providers, faith-based organizations. Would any individual from these groups be a good fit for your district’s sex education advisory board?

Refer to the “Resources” section of this toolkit for descriptions of different local, state, and national organizations who work to improve sex education policy and sexual health.

- Research your local, state, and national opponents

Working with your school board and sex education advisory board (local-level advocacy) ...

- Get to know your school board members

Tip: Determine each board member's educational priorities. What are their views on sex education? Are they willing to champion your cause? Would it help your cause to publicize their positions and views on social media? Community newspaper or radio? How can you use school board elections to elect people who are willing to support sex education that is comprehensive?

Ensure that at least one member of your advocacy group attends every school board meeting.

- Set up one-on-one meetings with school board members

Tip: Schedule these meetings in advance of school board policy decisions. Keeping in regular contact with board members will show them you are a reliable source of information.

- Testify at school board meetings

Tip: If you plan to testify with several people, make sure to use your time wisely. Coordinate what each of you will say beforehand to ensure you are addressing different aspects of the same core argument.

Refer to the "Samples" section of this toolkit for templates on public hearing comments.

- Urge district to create a sex education advisory board, if there is none
- Join your local sex education advisory board

Working with policy-makers (state- and federal-level advocacy) ...

- Be prepared before attending a meeting with a policymaker or their staff.
 - Did you tailor your message to this particular policymaker?
 - Did you compile research and data to support your position?
 - Did you research the policymaker's position? Do you know who you will be meeting with?

Tip: If you are visiting a legislator's office, be flexible! Arrive early and be ready for any unexpected changes, such as meeting with a different person than anticipated.

- If you are visiting the policymaker in a group, did you decide each person's role?
- Meet with the policymaker. To maximize effectiveness of the meeting, consider doing the following:
 - Bring a constituent

Tip: Legislators' jobs are to represent their district and the interests of their constituents. Meetings will be a lot more effective if someone from the legislator's district is leading the meeting.

- Be concise, direct, and honest.

Tip: Practice what you will say to the policymaker and/or office staff members and plan to say it in 10 minutes or less. Make sure you stay focused and have a clear "ask," or what action you would like the legislator to take.

Do not get rattled if you are asked a question you don't know the answer to. This happens all the time! Let them know you don't know the answer, but will follow up with an answer after the meeting.

- Send a follow up and stay in touch with the office

Tip: Shortly after your meeting with the office (within a day or two), send a thank-you note to the legislators and staff members you met (it can be by email). You should include any answers to unanswered questions during the meeting, any follow-up information, and digital copies of the materials you left. Maintain a relationship with the staff at the office so they know you are a resource they can use and consult in the future.

Crafting your messaging...

- Tailor your message to different audiences
- Develop a few key messages

Tip: There might be a lot you want to say in advocating for sex education, but it is important to develop three to four key messaging points and to repeat them whenever you can - this will help you consistently communicate your most effective messages. Take every opportunity you can to repeat these key messages.

Some examples include: "ALL young people deserve medically accurate sex education" and "Sex education must be inclusive of ALL young people - regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities, racial and ethnic backgrounds, or past or current sexual experiences."

□ Make it personal

Tip: Think about why you are passionate about advocating for sex education. Do you have any personal experiences or stories about how sex educa-

tion (or lack thereof) impacted your life? Consider sharing these stories in addition to the research and data in support of your goals. Personal stories and examples help further your point and speaks to the heart.

“It is important that our queer and trans stories, too often erased, are passed down for generations to come.”



What are Resources I Can Use?

Sex Education & HIV/AIDS Organizations in Michigan

The Ruth Ellis Center (REC) provides short and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless, and at-risk LGBTQ and questioning youth and young adults of color.⁴⁵ Based in Highland Park, Michigan, REC provides “outreach and safety-net services, integrated primary & behavioral health care services and case management, skill-building workshops, HIV prevention programs, family preservation programming, and the only residential foster care program specifically for LGBTQ youth in the Midwest.”⁴⁶

Link-Up Michigan and **Link-Up Detroit** provide HIV+ people with free and confidential short-term support, referrals, and community resources.

Community Health Awareness Group (CHAG), is the largest minority-focused AIDS service in Michigan, aiming to improve the quality of life of Detroit’s Black community through HIV prevention and care.

HealthHIV works to advance “effective prevention, care, support, and health equity for people living with, or at risk for, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C—particularly with LGBT and other underserved communities.”⁴⁷

MOASH, the Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health, mobilizes youth voices, engages community partners, and informs decision-makers to advance sexual health, identities, and rights. MOASH envisions a society that respects and celebrates youth identities, advocacy, and informed choices.⁴⁸



Coordinated by MOASH, **Michigan Youth Voice for Sexual Health (MY Voice)** is a statewide advisory council on adolescent sexual health, made up of young people ages 16-21.⁴⁹ MY Voice offers valuable input to statewide sexual health providers, ensuring programs and materials targeting youth are appropriate, culturally competent, and accessible.⁵⁰

Also coordinated by MOASH, the **Step Toward Equity Project (STEP)** works to design and implement a sex education and health service access program designed to address the social determinants of health of Black youth, ages 10-19, in Detroit.

MOASH also recently formed the **Michigan Coalition on Adolescent Sexual Health (MiCASH)**, a statewide coalition of professionals and stakeholders interested in adolescent sexual health meeting

2-4 times a year to share resources on strategies.

The **University of Michigan Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI)** works with school-based health and youth-serving organizations in Michigan and across the country.⁵¹ AHI aims to improve health care to better serve young people, with a focus on diversity and inclusion. AHI also hosts an [Annual Conference on Adolescent Health](#).

The **Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence** works with traditionally marginalized communities to end violence by addressing societal issues like sexism, racism, and other oppressions based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.

The **Michigan Department of Education (MDE)** is the state governmental agency that provides

training, technical assistance, and resources to local school communities regarding the adoption and implementation of quality sexuality education programs of instruction that are consistent with student needs, community norms, and law and research and best practice. The Department develops resources to support school district leaders, maintains a webpage for school districts, partners with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services on the development of [model health education curricula](#), and provides Training-of-Trainers to a network of [regional school health coordinators](#) who train district leaders and teacher in the adoption and implementation of evidence-based programs. MDE also provides regional trainings on [safe and supportive schools for LGBTQ students](#).

The **Regional School Health Coordinators** are a statewide infrastructure of coordinators, representing 24 coordinating sites and typically employed by a regional education service agencies or intermediate school district. The coordinators provide evidence-based materials, training, and technical assistance to local school districts on health education, including HIV/STD and sex education. Coordinators work within a Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child ([WSSC](#)) framework, and partner with schools, communities, and parents to increase student health and academic outcomes. Check [here](#) to identify the coordinator who supports your local school-community, and [here](#) for contact information.



National Organizations

The **National LGBTQ Task Force** works to secure full freedom, justice, and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people. For over 40 years, we have been at the forefront of the social justice movement by training thousands of organizers and advocating for change at the federal, state, and local level.

Advocates for Youth partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies and champion programs that recognize young people's rights to honest sexual health information; accessible, confidential, and affordable sexual health services; and the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth. Advocates for Youth has also created **Rights, Respect, Responsibility**, a sex education curriculum that fully meets the National Sexuality Education Stan-

dards seeks to address both the functional knowledge related to sexuality and the specific skills necessary to adopt healthy behaviors.

SIECUS asserts that sexuality is a fundamental part of being human, one worthy of dignity and respect. It advocates for the rights of all people to accurate information, comprehensive sexuality education, and the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health services. SIECUS works to create a world that ensures social justice inclusive of sexual and reproductive rights.

The Aro and Ace Advocacy Project (TAAAP) is an organization dedicated to providing resources on asexuality and aromanticism to the public. TAAAP's goals are to increase the visibility of ace and aro identities, to provide resources on asexuality and aromanticism to professionals (e.g. doctors, mental health professionals, educators), and to support ace and aro members of society.

SAMPLES

Social Media

Talk about the importance of sex education and HIV/AIDS ed. Examples:

Schools play an important role in educating young people about sex, sexuality, STI/STDs, and HIV/AIDS prevention, but LGBTQ youth of color are being harmed by outdated policies that don't reflect their experiences.

It's time to include young people in the conversation about their needs in sex education.

Let your classmates, friends, and followers know what Michigan law says about sex education and HIV/AIDS ed. Examples:

Did you know: MI law doesn't require schools to teach sex education.

When sex education classes are offered in MI, they don't have to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity.

Let your classmates, friends, and followers know that your school district is considering changes to the sex education or HIV/AIDS curriculum and that they may be able to be a member of the Sex Education Advisory Board. Examples:

[School district name] school district is thinking about [adding OR changing OR removing] [topic] [to OR from] the [sex education OR HIV] curriculum. Are you a student, parent, educator, community health professional or clergy? Apply to be a member of the Sex Education Advisory Board so you can help the school board make decisions on these important issues.

Are you a student, parent, educator, community health professional or clergy in the [school district name] school district? Apply to be a member of the Sex Education Advisory Board so you can help shape sex education and HIV/AIDS education policy [here, include a link to an application if possible]

Announce when you know of a public hearing, so others can have an opportunity to be heard.

Examples:

The Sex Education Advisory Board for [school district name] school district is holding a public hearing at [time] on [date] at [place]. Be there to make your voice heard about the sex education curriculum!

The school board for [school district name] is holding a public hearing on changes to the HIV/AIDS curriculum. Be there to make your voice heard: [date, time, place]

Share resources. Examples:

@REC_Detroit is the only residential foster care program specifically for LGBTQ youth in the Midwest! REC provides short and long-term residential safe space and support services for runaway, homeless, and at-risk LGBTQ and questioning

youth and young adults of color.

Link-Up Michigan and Link-Up Detroit provide HIV+ people with free and confidential short-term support, referrals, and community resources. Find out more at linkup-detroit.com.

CHAG is improving the quality of life of Detroit's Black community through HIV prevention and care. Check out <http://www.chagdetroit.org/home.html> for more info.

Encourage others to get involved. Examples:

@InfoMOASH advocates for the best adolescent sexual health programs in MI and offers programs like MY Voice and STEP—run by young people for young people! Get involved today.

Want to make sex education better in MI? Check out UM's @Adolescent_Hlth initiative for resources, trainings, and more!

Sample Comment for Public Hearing: Fill in the [blank]!

Members of the [Sexual Education Advisory Board OR School District Board]:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the [sex education curriculum OR HIV/AIDS curriculum] for the [school district name].

My name is [your name]. I am a [student OR parent OR educator OR community member], and this issue matters to me because [sex education OR HIV/AIDS education] needs to effectively address the needs of LGBTQ youth and youth of color. *[Here, consider including a short personal statement about how this issue affects you directly.]*

[Here, specifically state why you agree with or disagree with the proposed change, or suggest additional changes you think should be made, for example: This proposed change does not include a discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity, which would make sex education and HIV/AIDS education more inclusive and comprehensive. OR: Programs that make abstinence the focus of prevention of pregnancy or HIV/STIs are harmful, increasing feelings of shame and stigma among students. Use information from this toolkit to help shape your ideas!]

Thank you for your time.

Sample Letter to a Policymaker

(From *SIECUS' Community Action Toolkit* found at:
www.bit.ly/SIECUSCAT)

June 30, 2018

The Honorable Maria Tompkins
Legislative Office Address
Anytown, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Tompkins:

As a constituent, I urge you to ensure that sexuality education that is comprehensive and inclusive is available in all schools in your district and across the state.

Numerous studies about sex education programs that include messages about both abstinence and contraception have found them effective in helping young people delay the onset of sexual intercourse, reduce their number of sexual partners, and increase contraception and condom use when they do become sexually active.

In contrast, there is no evidence that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs work. In fact, new research has concluded that some abstinence-only-until-marriage programs may be causing harm to young people by undermining the use of safer sex practices when participants do become sexually active.

The great majority of Americans share my support for sex education that is comprehensive in nature. A survey by the Othmer Institute found that 90% of the engaged, voting public believe all students should receive sexuality education that is developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, and that begins early and continues through high school. Further, this survey found that only 10% of engaged voters support abstinence-only-until-marriage programs being taught in public schools.

Please ensure that no new money is spent on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and instead much-needed funds are put towards more effective sexuality education. I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Ann Jones
(505) 555-555
ann@anytownemail.com

Endnotes

1 <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MICHIGAN-FY17-FINAL-New.pdf>

2 *Id.*

3 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

4 *Id.*

5 *Id.*

6 <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>

7 *Id.*

8 <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MICHIGAN-FY17-FINAL-New.pdf>

9 *Id.*

10 *Id.*

11 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

12 *Id.*

13 *Id.*

14 *Id.*

15 *Id.*

16 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SBE_Sex_Ed_Policy_and_Resources_249446_7.pdf

17 *Id.*

18 Michigan Code 380.1507(1), <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-380-1507>

19 <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SIECUS-SP-FY17-State-Law-and-Policy-Chart.pdf>

20 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

21 *Id.*

22 <https://sexetc.org/states/michigan>

23 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

24 *Id.*

25 *Id.*

26 *Id.*

27 *Id.*

28 *Id.*

29 *Id.*; https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/8_Sex_Ed_Advisory_Boards_Commonly_Asked_Questions_249522_7ADA_547730_7.pdf

30 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

31 *Id.*

32 *Id.*

33 *Id.*

34 See https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2018/05/allendale_schools_cancels_sex.html

35 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2_Sample_Recommendations_for_Conducting_Public_Hearings_251722_7ADA_547741_7.pdf

36 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Michigans_Sex_Education_Laws_Summary_303019_7.pdf

37 *Id.*

38 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2_Sample_Recommendations_for_Conducting_Public_Hearings_251722_7ADA_547741_7.pdf

39 <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/michigan/open-meetings-laws-michigan>

40 *Id.*

41 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2_Sample_Recommendations_for_Conducting_Public_Hearings_251722_7ADA_547741_7.pdf

42 <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/michigan/open-meetings-laws-michigan>

43 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2_Sample_Recommendations_for_Conducting_Public_Hearings_251722_7ADA_547741_7.pdf

44 https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/8_Sex_Ed_Advisory_Boards_Commonly_Asked_Questions_249522_7ADA_547730_7.pdf

45 <http://www.ruthelliscenter.org/>

46 *Id.*

47 <http://healthhiv.org/about/>

48 <http://www.moash.org/>

49 <http://www.moash.org/my-voice/>

50 *Id.*

51 <http://www.umhs-adolescenthealth.org/about-us/>

