

# wise iowa project

Working to Institutionalize Sex Ed

The WISE (Working to Institutionalize Sex Ed) Iowa Project is a project of EyesOpenIowa: Your Connection to Adolescent Sexual Health (formerly FutureNet).

The mission of EyesOpenIowa is to support Iowa communities in ensuring the sexual health of all adolescents through advocacy, education, and collaboration. We invite all providers of sexual health education in Iowa to voluntarily commit to Our Four Commitments to Excellence.



## WISE IOWA PROJECT

# Goal

The goal of the project is to increase Iowa school districts' sustainable implementation of effective comprehensive sex education that complies with the State's Human Growth and Development mandate. The WISE Iowa Project will assist six school districts in meeting this requirement through the implementation of Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) policies and curricula. The models created and lessons learned in these six districts may be used as tools to assist other districts in the state to institutionalize effective CSE policies and practices.



## COMPONENTS

*of this project include:*

- Assessing the status of district compliance with state law.
- Educating school administrators about compliance requirements.
- Enhancing the readiness of six districts to institutionalize the implementation of comprehensive sex education.
- Developing a cadre of trainers to provide training on select evidence-based sex education curricula.
- Creating evaluation tools to measure the success of such efforts.
- Sharing lessons learned with additional school districts and community stakeholders committed to the provision of comprehensive sex education.



## WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION (CSE)

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) addresses both abstinence and age-appropriate, medically accurate information. Comprehensive sex education is also developmentally appropriate, introducing information on relationships, decision-making, assertiveness, and skill building to resist social/peer pressure, depending on grade-level. <sup>1</sup>



## WHY IOWA *Why Now?*

Public opinion polls of parents of middle school students show that **93%** believe that it is very important or somewhat important to have sex education included as part of school curriculum. **91%** of parents of high school students agree. Both groups support educating adolescents about condom and contraception use. <sup>2</sup>

**73%** of adults and **56%** of teens wish for more information about both a **bstinence and birth control or protection in schools.** <sup>2</sup>

## SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS

The 2007 Iowa Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that among high school students: <sup>3</sup>

**43%** had sexual intercourse

**4%** had sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13 years

**13%** had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their life

**34%** were currently sexually active <sup>a</sup>

**34%** did not use a condom during last sexual intercourse <sup>b</sup>

The state legislature has established the need for factual education of all of Iowa's students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Age-appropriate and research-based education is required by Iowa Code 279.5.

# SEX EDUCATION IN IOWA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Guidelines & Resources

### SUMMARY

Iowa Code section 279.50 requires public schools to provide age-appropriate and research-based instruction in human growth and development including instruction about human sexuality, self-esteem, stress management, interpersonal relationships, domestic abuse, HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) and the availability of a vaccine to prevent HPV, and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in grades one through twelve.



### DEFINITIONS

Iowa Code section 279.50 provides the following definitions to assist school districts in assessing curricular materials.

#### Age-appropriate

means topics, messages, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group.

#### Research-based

means all of the following:

1. Complete information that is verified or supported by the weight of research conducted in compliance with accepted scientific methods; recognized as medically accurate and objective by leading professional organizations and agencies with relevant expertise in the field, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Nurses; and, published in peer-reviewed journals where appropriate.
2. Information that is free of racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender biases.

### PROVISIONS

#### To Parents and Guardians

As stated in Iowa Code section 279.50, school districts are required to provide to the parent or guardian of any student enrolled in the school district annual information about the human growth and development curriculum to be taught that year and how parents/guardians may review the materials prior to their use in the classroom. In addition, schools must notify parents or guardians that they may file a written request with the appropriate principal to excuse their child from any instruction to which they object.

### REQUIRED TOPICS

For grades 7 and 8, the regulations of the Iowa Department of Education as stated in Iowa Administrative Code 281-12.5 require health instruction that includes the following topics:

- human sexuality
- self-esteem
- stress management
- interpersonal relationships
- emotional and social health
- health resources
- prevention and control of disease, and
- characteristics of communicable diseases, including STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and AIDS.

For grades 9–12, the same regulations require health instruction that includes:

- human growth and development
- substance abuse and nonuse
- emotional and social health
- health resources,
- prevention and control of disease, including STDs and AIDS,
- current crucial health issues
- human sexuality
- self-esteem
- stress management, and
- interpersonal relationships.

According to Iowa Code section 279.50, schools are not prohibited from developing and making available abstinence-based or abstinence-only materials or from offering an abstinence-based or abstinence-only curriculum in meeting the human growth and development requirements. However, the content of these materials must be age-appropriate and research-based as defined above.

### PUBLIC ACCESS TO CURRICULUM

Iowa Code section 279.50 requires schools to comply with requests from any agency or organization that asks for information about the human growth and development curriculum used in each grade level and the procedure used by the district for inspecting and updating the instructional materials.

### Resources

As mandated in Iowa Code section 256.9 (49), the Iowa Department of Education provides an annually updated list of resources and curricula intended to assist school districts in developing and selecting materials that comply with the human growth and development mandates of Iowa Code. To access a copy, go to the Iowa Department of Education's website at [www.iowa.gov/educate](http://www.iowa.gov/educate) and go to the Health Education page. You may also obtain a copy by contacting [EyesOpenIowa](mailto:eyesopen@iowa.gov).





# Partners

The WISE Iowa Project has developed a network of partners who are actively investing their expertise and resources to the project. These partners include:

Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Department of Human Services

Iowa Department of Public Health

Emma Goldman Clinic

The Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland

Family Planning Council of Iowa

The Grove Foundation

The David & Lucile Packard Foundation

## FUNDING

*The WISE Iowa Project is part of the national WISE Initiative. This initiative includes eight projects in seven states in various stages of implementation, and is funded by The Grove Foundation and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation.*



## OUR FOUR COMMITMENTS TO EXCELLENCE

**EyesOpenIowa:**  
*Your Connection To Adolescent Sexual Health.*

*EyesOpenIowa invites all providers of sexual health education in Iowa to voluntarily commit to the following:*



### *Accuracy*

Sexual health education will be factual, medically accurate, and informed by the weight of available peer-reviewed research.

### *Accountability*

Providers will voluntarily adhere to a basic set of science-based standards and be willing to accept a periodic peer review of practices and program content.

### *Affirmation*

Sexual health education will affirm sexuality as a natural lifelong quality of being human which can be expressed in healthy, responsible ways.

### *Advocacy*

Providers will actively advocate for:

- Abstinence first from any form of risky sexual activity,
- Age-appropriate, medically accurate sexuality education for all,
- Access and referral to reproductive health care and services for sexually active youth, and
- The efficacy of contraception and condoms in reducing the risk of pregnancy and STI/HIV infection.

[www.eyesopeniowa.org](http://www.eyesopeniowa.org)

# wise iowa project

Working to Institutionalize Sex Ed

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
**PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Katie Noynaert**  
WISE Iowa Project Coordinator  
katie@eyesopeniowa.org  
515-276-6788

**[www.eyesopeniowa.org](http://www.eyesopeniowa.org)**



<sup>1</sup> Advocates for Youth.(2009, September). Comprehensive Sex Education: Research and Results: Retrieved from [www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/fscse.pdf](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/fscse.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2010). Retrieved from [www.thenationalcampaign.org/state-data/state-profile.aspx?state=iowa](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/state-data/state-profile.aspx?state=iowa)

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2009, November 9). Healthy Youth!. Retrieved from CDC website: [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/states/ia/htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/states/ia/htm)

<sup>a</sup> Had sexual intercourse with at least one person during the 3 months before the survey.

<sup>b</sup> Among students who were currently sexually active.