

Strengthening Colorado's Support for Sexual Health Education

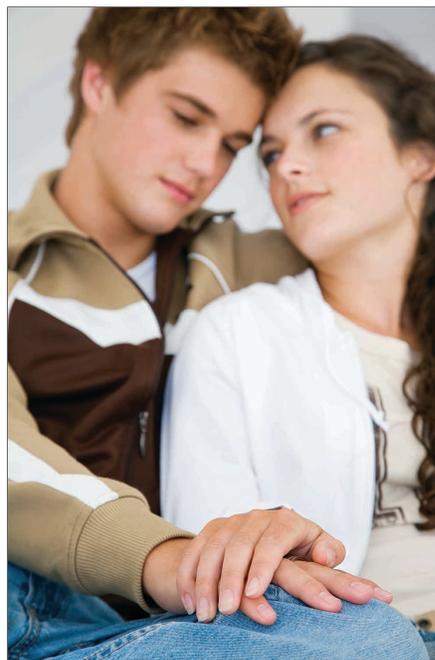
Problem Overview:

Few Colorado teens—particularly the most vulnerable populations—have had access to sexual health education. Although its state health and physical education standards and state law emphasize sexual health education, educational policies in Colorado are largely determined at the local school district level. As a result, variations occur in how Colorado's 183 local education agencies determine the content and delivery of health education instruction, especially for high-risk students.

Program/Activity Description:

With funding from the CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) focused on four major areas to strengthen sexual health education in schools and help address public health concerns related to youths' sexual risk behaviors:

- To help develop a state plan for promoting youth sexual health, the CDE's HIV Coordinator worked with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Colorado Youth Sexual Health Team to develop "Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action." This statewide plan for assessment and action is designed to offer health, educational, and economic strategies to help improve the well-being of Colorado's youth.
- To strengthen the statewide infrastructure for sexual health education, the CDE's HIV Coordinator helped convene the Colorado Coalition for Comprehensive Sexual Health in Schools (Coalition). With leadership from the Colorado Youth Sexual Health Team, this broad-based group recommended, compiled, and assessed key guidelines and resources for schools.
- To consolidate recommended resources for local use, the CDE worked with the Coalition to create Colorado Resources for Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in Schools as an academic response to the "Call to Action." These resources, which support delivery of high-quality sexual health education for all students, include state and national educational guidelines, policies and statistics, district considerations and recommendations, and curriculum and instructional resources.
- To support high-quality sexual health education programs for at-risk youth in alternative school settings, the CDE's HIV Coordinator—with funding support from the CDPHE—collaborated with two alternative education schools to create a model sexual health education curriculum for schools addressing the needs of high-risk students. More than 16,000 students attend alternative education schools in Colorado.



Program/Activity Results:

As a result of CDE's initiatives and collaborative efforts —

- In October 2012, Colorado launched the "Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action" initiative. The action plan provides a variety of strategies and approaches tailored to different resources, skills, and knowledge available to communities to improve the sexual health of the state's youth.
- In winter 2012, Colorado piloted high-quality sexual health education in two alternative school settings. Subsequently, the program will be recommended as a model for implementation to the much broader student population enrolled in Colorado's 95 alternative educational schools.
- In spring 2013, the dissemination of the Colorado Resources for Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in Schools enabled all districts and schools throughout the state to have the most current and complete resources to assure high quality sexual health education.