

A Definition of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

A rights-based approach to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality—physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It views sexuality holistically, as a part of young people’s emotional and social development. It recognizes that information alone is not enough. Young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values.

CSE covers a broad range of issues relating to the physical, biological, emotional and social aspects of sexuality. This approach recognizes and accepts all people as sexual beings and is concerned with more than just the prevention of disease or pregnancy. CSE programs should be adapted to the age and stage of development of the target group.

CSE must help young people to:

- Acquire accurate information on sexual and reproductive rights, information to dispel myths, and references to resources and services.
- Develop life skills including critical thinking, communication and negotiation, self-development and decision-making; sense of self; confidence; assertiveness; ability to take responsibility; ability to ask questions and seek help; and empathy.
- Nurture positive attitudes and values, including open-mindedness, respect for self and others, positive self-worth/esteem, comfort, nonjudgmental attitude, sense of responsibility, and positive attitude toward their sexual and reproductive health.

Seven Essential Components of Comprehensive Sexuality Education

1 Gender: Difference between gender and sex; exploring gender roles and attributes; understanding perceptions of masculinity and femininity within the family and across the life cycle; society's changing norms and values; manifestations and consequences of gender bias, stereotypes and inequality (including self-stigmatization).

2 Sexual and reproductive health and HIV: Sexuality and the life cycle (i.e., puberty, menopause, stigma, sexual problems); anatomy; reproductive process; how to use condoms and other forms of contraception (including emergency contraception); pregnancy options and information; legal and safe abortion; unsafe abortion; understanding HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including transmission and symptoms; HIV and STI prevention, treatment, care and support; voluntary counseling and testing for HIV; antiretroviral therapy and living with HIV; prevention of mother-to-child transmission; injection drug use and HIV; virginity; abstinence and faithfulness; sexual response; social expectations; self-esteem and empowerment; respect for the body; myths and stereotypes.

3 Sexual rights and sexual citizenship: Knowledge of international human rights and national policies, laws and structures that relate to people's sexuality; rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health; social, cultural and ethical barriers to exercising rights related to sexual and reproductive health; understanding that sexuality and culture are diverse and dynamic; available services and resources and how to access them; participation; practices and norms; diversity of sexual identities; advocacy; choice; protection; negotiation skills; consent and the right to have sex only when you are ready; the right to freely express and explore one's sexuality in a safe, healthy and pleasurable way.

4 Pleasure: Having a positive approach to young people's sexuality; understanding that sex should be enjoyable and consensual; understanding that sex is much more than just sexual intercourse; sexuality as a healthy and normal part of everybody's life; the biology and emotions behind the human sexual response; gender and pleasure; sexual well-being; safer sex practices and pleasure; masturbation; love, lust and relationships; interpersonal communication; the diversity of sexuality; the first sexual experience; consent; alcohol, drugs and the implications of their use; addressing stigma associated with pleasure.

5 Violence: Exploring the various types of violence toward men and women and how they manifest, particularly gender-based violence; nonconsensual sex and understanding what is unacceptable; rights and laws; support options available and seeking help; community norms and myths regarding power and gender; prevention, including personal safety plans; self-defense techniques; understanding the dynamics of victims and abusers; appropriate referral mechanisms for survivors; preventing the victim from becoming a perpetrator; men and boys as both perpetrators and allies in violence prevention.

6 Diversity: Recognizing and understanding the range of diversity in our lives (e.g., faith, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability/disability, HIV status and sexual orientation); a positive view of diversity; recognizing discrimination, its damaging effects and being able to manage it; developing a belief in equality; supporting young people to move beyond just tolerance.

7 Relationships: Different types of relationships (family, friends, sexual, romantic etc.); that relationships are constantly changing; emotions; intimacy (emotional and physical); rights and responsibilities; power dynamics; recognizing healthy and unhealthy or coercive relationships; communication, trust and honesty in relationships; peer pressure and social norms; that love and sex are not the same.

Source:

http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/ippf_framework_for_comprehensive_sexuality_education.pdf



Youth-Friendly Services

Youth-friendly service delivery is about providing health services based on a comprehensive understanding of what young people in any given society or community want and need. It is also based on an understanding of, and respect for, the realities of young people's diversity and sexual rights.

A youth-friendly approach requires offering young people a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services, including

- Sexual and reproductive health counseling
- Contraceptive counseling and provision (including emergency contraception)
- Abortion services
- Prevention, testing and counseling services for HIV and other STIs
- Prenatal and postpartum services
- Sexual abuse counseling
- Relationship and sexuality counseling

Youth-friendly service delivery should also take into account the special needs of young people

- Where possible, these services should be provided in an integrated manner at the same delivery point to allow for ease of access for young people.
- The financial barriers that young people can face should also be recognized and services should be provided free of charge or at a discounted rate to young clients.
- Services are only truly youth-friendly if young people themselves are involved in determining the content, scope, and monitoring and evaluation of such services.

Source:

<http://www.ippf.org/our-work/what-we-do/adolescents/services>

Effective Youth-Friendly Services

Whether services are provided in a clinical setting, a youth-oriented site, in schools or in the community, certain youth-friendly characteristics are essential for effective services.

- Providers should be trained to work competently, sensitively and respectfully with adolescents and young people on their sexual and reproductive health needs.
- Services must be confidential, nonjudgmental and private.
- Clinic opening hours should be convenient for adolescents and young people: Such times include late afternoons (after school), evenings and weekends.
- Services should be accessible to all adolescents and young people, irrespective of their age, marital status, sexual orientation or ability to pay.
- Effective referral systems should be in place.
- Opportunities should be made available for adolescents and young people to be involved in designing, implementing and evaluating the program.
- Services should seek to involve and gain the support of those important in the lives of young people and in the local community, such as partners, parents/guardians and schools.

Sources:

http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/inspire_provide.pdf

<http://www.ippf.org/resources/publications/Keys-youth-friendly-services>



Gender Issues

Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights and United Nations values. “Equal rights for men and women” is a fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter, adopted by world leaders in 1945.

Gender-based inequalities and discrimination deny individuals their sexual rights, routinely resulting in lasting damage to health and emotional well-being.

Gender-based power inequalities are prevalent in many settings and prevent many individuals from making their own decisions about if, when and with whom to have sex; whether to use contraceptives; if and when to have children and how many to have; and how and whether to seek health care.

Social and cultural norms often deny girls and women—and often boys and men—access to comprehensive information about sexual and reproductive health. Such norms can perpetuate harmful traditions that cause physical and emotional damage. Cultural expectations and dictates can deny girls and women the right to make choices about their own bodies and futures and prevent their ability to access health care.

Gender-based violence encompasses all physical, sexual and psychological violence that is rooted in individuals’ gender roles or identities. Violence against women is the most common form of gender-based violence and one of the most pervasive violations of human rights worldwide. Gender-based violence can also be perpetrated against boys and men, often when their sexual or gender identity does not conform to heterosexual norms. Similarly, transgender people and men who have sex with men frequently experience violence.

Girls and women are a very diverse population, but they represent one of the most vulnerable groups in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Transgender people face complex barriers and discrimination. They are often denied the right to be recognized as a gender different from that which they were assigned at birth. They frequently face challenges obtaining employment and participating in public arenas, and health providers are not always accessible or responsive to their concerns. There are others who identify their gender in different ways, and they too face discrimination and challenges achieving good health and realizing their goals.

Boys and men also suffer as a result of gender norms. For instance, cultural definitions of manliness may prevent men and boys from communicating their sexual and reproductive health needs and adopting safer sexual behaviors.

Sources:

<http://www.ippf.org/our-work/what-we-do/Gender-equality>



Young People’s Sexual Rights Are Human Rights

Preamble of the International Planned Parenthood Federation’s declaration on sexual rights

- The IPPF declaration is grounded in and informed by international agreements such as United Nation Conventions.
- IPPF recognizes that sexuality is an important part of being human throughout one’s life.
- IPPF supports a vision that aims to respect, protect and advance the rights of all persons to sexual autonomy and to promote sexual health and rights within a framework of nondiscrimination.
- IPPF believes that it is important to create accountable structures and to encourage government policies and laws that will make sure that these rights are protected for everyone and, where possible, promoted and fulfilled/enjoyed.

10 RIGHTS

1	Right to equality, equal protection of the law and freedom from all forms of discrimination based on sex, sexuality or gender
2	Right to participation for all persons, regardless of sex, sexuality or gender
3	Right to life, liberty, security of the person and bodily integrity
4	Right to privacy
5	Right to personal autonomy and recognition before the law
6	Right to freedom of thought, opinion and expression; right to association
7	Right to health and to the benefits of scientific progress
8	Right to education and information
9	Right to choose whether or not to marry and to found and plan a family, and to decide whether or not, how and when, to have children
10	Right to accountability and redress

Sexual rights translated by youth volunteers into simple, youth-friendly language

› **The right to be yourself:**

be free to make your own decisions, to express yourself, to enjoy sex, to be safe, to choose to marry (or not to marry) and to plan a family

› **The right to know:**

about sex, contraceptives, HIV and other STIs, your rights

› **The right to protect yourself and be protected:**

from unplanned pregnancies, HIV and other STIs, sexual abuse

› **The right to have health care that is:**

confidential, affordable, good-quality, given with due respect

› **The right to be involved:**

in planning programs, at all levels

› **The right to be free of stigma and discrimination:**

based on gender, class, ethnicity, religion, economic status, age, (dis)ability or sexual orientation

Source:

<http://www.ippf.org/resource/Sexual-Rights-IPPF-declaration>