

## Education and Public Health Partnerships to Support Adolescent Sexual Health Services

### Tips for Working with Schools



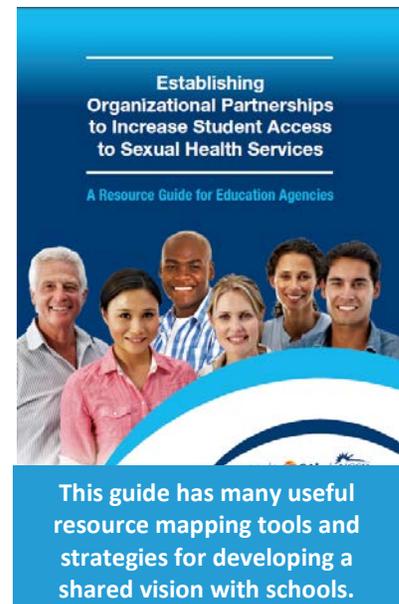
*Students not only need the knowledge and skills, but also access to sexual health services in order to prevent HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and unintended pregnancy. Health Departments and community-based providers of HIV/STI and family planning services can play a critical role in partnering with schools to support student health, well-being and educational achievement. Many providers say that they struggle to build relationships with schools. Below are some tips on connecting with schools and forging mutually beneficial partnerships.*

#### Do Your Homework

- Learn about Michigan law pertaining to sex education in schools by visiting [www.michigan.gov/hived](http://www.michigan.gov/hived).
- Talk with key stakeholders to learn about local policies, programs, or guidelines pertaining to HIV/STI prevention, access to services, and sex education in the school district.
- Learn about the overall priorities of the district and current issues or challenges they may be facing.

#### Tips for Starting the Conversation

- Contact the school principal, counselor, nurse, or health teacher to let them know about the services your agency provides.
- Offer to serve on a committee or team. This is a great way to make initial connections.
- Ask to set up a meeting. Find out how the school could use your help and how they benefit from the partnership (“what’s in it for them”).
- Contact health teachers to let them know that you are available as a resource/community partner to present in class or host a field trip to the clinic.
- Work with student government or gay-straight alliances (GSAs) on student-led initiatives or presentations.
- Avoid going in and telling schools, parents, and/or students *everything* they need to know. Information should come gradually and with a purpose.
- Emphasize partnerships with parents in helping students reach their educational and life goals and how family planning can benefit.



*Contacting the schools for information or contacts is never bothersome. We are thrilled that you are reaching out, and we may not know that you are there. If a new center opens or if an existing center gets new staff/offers new services, it can become a completely different resource for our students and community. We want you on our team!*

– Assistant Superintendent

## Ways You Can Help

Community-based health providers (e.g., health departments, family planning agencies) are uniquely situated to provide support to families and schools to help prevent HIV, other STIs, and unintended pregnancy and improve educational outcomes. Contact your local school district to find out how you can best support the district in meeting their goals. Below are some ways that you can provide support.

- Participate in school health fairs or other school-community events. Provide resources for families as well as students.
- Speak in health education class.
- Host a field trip to your clinic as part of the health education course.
- Talk with students. They are willing to be on advisory boards with doctors, physician assistants, nurses, and will provide key input.
- Serve on the Sex Education Advisory Board (SEAB). Provide statistics to the SEAB that help make the case for sex education.
- Serve on other district committees or workgroups (e.g., school improvement, parent engagement).
- Provide local data on STIs (e.g., zip code data), teen pregnancy, and service utilization.
- Review available data with the districts, parents, and students, and ask for their impressions of what it means to them. Include perception data, demographic data, process data, and program data. They are all intertwined and all make a difference in how resources are used.
- Conduct community-wide surveys to assess community comfort level with sex education, referrals to, or provision of sexual health services for young people.
- Offer to prepare and disseminate fact sheets and tweets about how to access services, benefits of family planning, etc.
- Compile a resource list of providers in the community to parents, school staff, and students.
- Participate on a school-community workgroup to examine barriers and develop a plan to provide support and access to students. Include diverse partners on the workgroup including parents, students, school staff, and community partners.
- In rural areas where distance is a barrier to accessing services, consider options (e.g., mobile clinic) that would bring services to the students.



*We so appreciate the 'zip code data' from our health department, and our health providers appreciate our MIPHY, student and parent surveys, and our program information.*

*--School Administrator*