

FEBRUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER: Healthy Relationships

Expanding Partnerships to Reduce HIV and other STDs among Adolescents through National Non-Governmental Organizations (PS16-1603)

Featured Blogs



6 Things Parents Can Do to Create a Healthy Parent/Child Relationship around Gender

Understandings of gender are changing rapidly and it can be challenging for parents to keep up. A study by J. Walter Thompson indicates that 56% of 13 to 20 year olds know someone who goes by gender neutral pronouns such as "they," "them," or "ze." That is certainly different than when I, and many parents today, were growing up. Parents might believe that they only have to pay attention to their child's gender if it falls outside of traditional gender norms. While it is true that transgender, non-binary, and otherwise gender-expansive children are particularly at risk, every child is limited by traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Parents play a crucial role in creating a safe and supportive environment for all young people around their gender. The key to a healthy relationship with your children around gender is to create space for them to explore their

gender, whatever it may be, so they can grow to their full potential, and to keep the lines of communication open.

1. Take 15 minutes to understand the key concepts and language of gender. Gaining an accurate understanding of gender is important, so parents don't reinforce misinformation. Read [Understanding Gender](#), which outlines the dimensions of gender--body, identity and expression--and clarifies that gender is spectrum (not a binary), and is distinct from sexual orientation.

2. Take 48 hours to see the world around you through a "gender lens". For instance, what gender messages are advertisements relaying? TV shows? Store layouts? Textbooks? Children and youth are taught early and often about what is expected based on their gender --pink and blue, "boy toys" and "girl toys", dresses are for girls, etc.-- so unless parents deliberately give them different messages, these are the messages they will be taught.

3. Examine your own gender. As parents we need to examine our own gender in order to understand our biases and perspective. Ask yourself such questions as:

- Growing up, did you think of yourself as a boy, a girl, both, neither or in some other way? How did you come to that recognition? When?
- What messages did you receive from those around you about gender? Did those messages make sense to you?
- How were kids who did not fit into expectations about gender treated by others (teachers, family, faith community, etc.)? By you?
- How have your race, ethnicity, faith, class, community/sense of place influenced your gender?
- How would you describe your gender?
- How has your understanding of gender influenced how you parent your children?

4. Determine the key messages you want each of your children to know about gender. Use your examination of your own gender to be intentional in how you parent your children around gender. Instead of unconsciously passing on restricting messages you may have received as a child, ask yourself what messages about gender you want to relay to your children.

5. Create a family environment open to gender exploration. Allow your children to choose, without pressure or unspoken messages, the clothes and accessories they wish to wear (as long as it is age appropriate), the activities they favor, the manner in which they wear their hair, and the images with which they surround themselves. If your child falls outside of typical gender norms and you feel discomfort, ask yourself if you would feel the same if a child of a different gender were expressing themselves in the same manner. You can find a detailed outline of supportive parenting practices for transgender, non-binary, and otherwise gender-expansive children in [this section of the Gender Spectrum website](#).

6. Talk with your children about gender. Assess how open your kids will be to discussing gender, and the best conditions for this conversation. Are they more prone to talking in the car? At bedtime? Many children don't want to answer direct questions about their own gender, so find opportunities to talk about gender in non-personal ways. Talk about shows or articles, or other people in your life as a way to bring up the topic. Sharing personal insights about your own gender story is another great way to spark conversation. Communicate openness and acceptance of gender diversity, if that's true for you. If not, indicate that you want to learn more! If they don't want to talk at first, don't give up. Youth often need parents to prove that a topic is really safe before opening up. By demonstrating to your children that you are a partner in this process, and showing a genuine sense of interest in how they see themselves, what they think, what they are experiencing, you show that you are there for them. This is key not only to a healthy parent/child relationship, but also to nurturing your children to be their authentic selves.

For more information about gender and youth, visit genderspectrum.org.

Parent Involvement Resources

Resources from the CDC

- Parent engagement and [strategies](#) for involving parents in school health.
- Promoting Parent Engagement in Schools to [Prevent HIV](#) and other STDs Among Teens
- Promoting Parent Engagement: [Improving Student Health](#) and Academic Achievement (information for school districts and administrators)
- Promoting Parent Engagement: [Improving Student Health](#) and Academic Achievement (information for teachers and other school staff)
- Ways to [Engage in Your Child's School](#) to Support Student Health and Learning

Other Resources

- In [this article](#) the National Education Association puts a research spotlight on parent involvement in education.
- Advocates for Youth explains how parent-child communication promotes healthy youth in [this factsheet](#).
- February is School-Based Health Care Awareness Month! Every February, the school-based health care community celebrates National School-Based Health Care Awareness Month—an opportunity to recognize success and raise awareness about how school-based health centers (SBHCs) are revolutionizing the way children and adolescents access health care services. On Tuesday, February 20, the School-Based Health Alliance will host a Twitter chat titled “Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies: SBHCs and Child/Adolescent Health” and we’d love your participation! Please visit the Alliance’s awareness month [webpage](#) for more information on Awareness month activities and ways to get involved.

Upcoming Conferences, Workshops and Webinars

Webinar: Making Room for Gender Diversity in School Health Services and Sex Education

Date & Location: Feb 7, 2018 2:00 – 3:00 PM Eastern Time

Presenters: Becca Mui (GLSEN) and Kim Westheimer (Gender Spectrum) Transgender and gender nonconforming students experience high levels of victimization in our nation’s schools, increasing their risk of adverse mental and physical health outcomes, including sexual health outcomes such as STIs and HIV. One strategy to improve health outcomes is to ensure that gender diverse students feel included and affirmed within the larger school community and their school-based health center. In this webinar, we will share relevant research, inclusive approaches and affirming practices that can be used when teaching or discussing puberty and reproductive health with students. Click [here](#) to register.

Conference: Education in the Digital Age

Date & Location: February 15-17, 2018 in Nashville, TN.

[Registration](#) for the [School Superintendents Association \(AASA\)](#) annual conference is now open!

Workshop: Strategies for Creating Safe and Supportive Environments for LGBTQ+ Students in Sexual Health Education Programming and Services

Date & Time: Friday, February 16, 2018 at 9:00AM

Presenters: Brittany McBride (Advocates for Youth) and Suzanne Mackey (School Based Health Alliance)

LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and others) youth face increased risk of depression, bullying, suicide, substance use, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In this workshop, participants will learn about the CDC-developed school-based approaches to reducing HIV/STDs. Promoting and providing a learning environment in which all students feel safe and supported is an essential function of schools, and is associated with improved education and health outcomes for all students. Recognizing the impact of adolescent brain development on risk taking behaviors and the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ students, it is essential that sexual health education and health services delivered in schools are inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ+ students. Through presentation and interactive methods including case studies and discussion, participants will learn specific strategies to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth within a safe and supportive environment, sexual health education and school health services.

Webinar: LGBTQ Inclusivity in Sexual Health Education

Date & Time: February 28, 2018 at 1:30PM EST

Presenter: Brittany McBride (Advocates for Youth)

Health education curricula to reduce HIV/STDs in young people should be inclusive for all students. Advocates for Youths' Rights, Respect, Responsibility (3Rs) endeavors to be the first K-12 curriculum that affirms LGBTQ youth and teaches the respect and dignity that all young people deserve. Please join Advocates for Youth for the LGBTQ Inclusivity and Sexual Health Education webinar on Wednesday, February 28th from 1:30 – 2:30 pm EST. Upon completion of the webinar, attendees will be able to explain why inclusive sexual health education is critical for LGBTQ youth, provide strategies to adapt lesson plans to make them more inclusive for LGBTQ youth, and highlight unique features regarding inclusivity of the Rights, Respect, Responsibility (3Rs) curriculum. **Click [here](#) to register!**

Conference: Time to Thrive

Date & Location: February 16-18, 2018 in Orlando, FL.

Presenters: Mary Beth Szydlowski (Advocates for Youth) and Lacey Rosenbaum, PhD (American Psychological Association).

[Registration](#) for the fifth annual Time to Thrive conference is open! The Human Rights Campaign Foundation in partnership with the National Education Association and the American Counseling Association present Time To THRIVE, the annual national conference to promote safety, inclusion and well-being for LGBTQ youth...everywhere!

Webinar: Educating Decision Makers and Developing Effective Messaging on Adolescent Sexual Health

Date & Time: March, TBD

Presenters: NCSD Policy Staff and other speakers TBD

It can be challenging to educate community leaders, decision makers, and key stakeholders on adolescent sexual health issues in your jurisdiction within the confines of your job. To address this unique challenge, NCSD has designed a webinar specifically to help you gain the skills and techniques necessary to actively and effectively address adolescent sexual health issues through the education of your community's decision makers. Speakers will provide strategies for identifying and mapping decision makers and public health champions and for developing messages that resonate with decision makers. The webinar will also cover appropriate policy education actions, state legislative process and non-legislative options for policy change, and framing your adolescent sexual health messages with shared beliefs/values so that they are compelling and memorable. **Registration and date and time information is forthcoming.** If you are interested in updates about this webinar, please complete [this form](#) with your email address.

Conference: SHAPE America

Date & Location: March 20-24, 2018 in Nashville, TN.

Registration for the [2018 SHAPE America National Convention & Expo](#) is now open! At the conference you'll connect and learn from innovative educators and leave inspired by new ideas! Click [here](#) to register!



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