
Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention

2020 Edition

Originally developed by the Maine Department of Education, 2002
By Susan Boyce, Lois Cooper and Joni Foster

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, without pioneers—Susan Boyce, Lois Cooper and Joni Foster—creating the first *Best Practices in HIV Prevention Education* in 2002, there would not have been the wonderful foundation for subsequent editions. Many thanks go to them, the Maine Department of Education and to all the Maine educators using *Best Practices*. They ensure that Maine students receive comprehensive sexuality education; assisting in the reduction of Maine’s teen pregnancy rate, preventing STI and HIV transmissions and enhancing the overall health and wellness of Maine people.

INTRODUCTION

We are excited to present the revised *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* curriculum. We believe it meets the needs of Maine students and educators. Below, are the unique features of *Best Practices* which:

- Positions sexual health in the context of healthy relationships, incorporating assertive communication, inclusivity and affirmative consent in situations and scenarios.
- Focuses on the importance of abstinence as well as the dual method of protection (birth control along with barrier methods) for preventing STIs, HIV and pregnancy.
- Provides 10 lessons with a variety of optional or alternative activities, some of which can be assigned as homework.
- Recognizes how teens learn by using student voices, interactive activities, opportunities to discuss ideas and concepts with their peers and skill-based strategies to apply the information to their own lives and situations.
- Provides opportunities for journaling and reflection so that students can personalize the information they learn.
- Includes strategies for ways that young people can access services and support so that they can advocate for themselves and their sexual well-being, at this point in their lives and into the future.
- Balances synchronous and in-class learning with options for delivering activities through distance and asynchronous learning, so that students can complete some of their learning individually, outside of classroom time, if needed.
- Provides up-to-date statistics on teen sexual behavior and experiences and current medical information on birth control methods (including long-acting, reversible contraception), HIV and STIs and sexual health services.
- Recognizes the importance of reviewing materials regularly as new information emerges in the areas of sexual health, inclusivity, affirmative consent, sexual identity, STIs and HIV, hormonal and barrier methods and up to date resources.
- Is supplemented by a curriculum resource page with additional tools and resources free to download at <http://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/teaching-materials/>.

Best Practices is based on the belief that a comprehensive approach to sexuality education increases knowledge and skills and promotes healthy attitudes and behaviors that reduce the risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Comprehensive sexuality education recognizes that sexuality is not just about sex or simply telling young people to “just say no”. It encompasses a broad range of topics that are central to who we are as human beings, including human development, relationships, identity and orientation, sexual health and sexual behavior.

In addition to providing up-to-date, accurate information, *Best Practices* encourages students to: explore their own attitudes, values and beliefs; develop communication skills and an understanding of affirmative consent; and promote self-respect and self-advocacy skills to achieve healthy outcomes. Students learn the skills necessary to take responsibility for their decisions and behavior, thereby enhancing their personal competence and well-being. The development of these abilities and skills is particularly important during adolescence, a time of testing, risk taking and developing their sense of identity and place in the world. In a safe environment students learn, practice and apply their knowledge and skills to make healthy, safe and wise choices.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention is designed to meet the sexual health education standards for Maine high school students (ages 13-18). The contents are appropriate for young people both in and out of formal education settings. Most educators deliver this curriculum during high school health class, and others find the content appropriate for use in 8th grade health classes. The curriculum contents address the needs of all young people in preventing STIs, HIV and unintended pregnancy, during their high school years and in the future, regardless of whether they identify as straight, gay, bisexual, transgender or are still questioning their sexual and gender identity.

KEY MESSAGES

- Abstinence is the most effective way to prevent STIs and pregnancy.
- Practicing assertive communication and affirmative consent is a foundation of sexual health and is the responsibility of each person in a relationship.
- Learning to *pause* and effectively communicate one’s sexual boundaries helps a person make healthy sexual decisions.
- Using a dual method of protection—both condoms and birth control—when sexually active is an effective way to prevent both STIs and pregnancy.
- Sexual health education that is inclusive of all gender identities and sexual orientations is beneficial for everyone.
- Understanding how to access health services empowers people to be sexually healthy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Best Practices is based primarily on two behavior change theories: Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), both of which have been used as a basis for many of the evidence-based STI/HIV and pregnancy prevention programs.

Social Cognitive Theory is grounded in the belief that human behavior is determined by a three-way relationship between cognitive factors (knowledge, expectations and attitudes), environment influences (social norms, access and support in the community) and behavior (the skills, practice and self-efficacy to follow through on a specific behavior). One concept alone cannot affect positive behavioral change, it takes all three.

Theory of Planned Behavior focuses on a person's perception of whether or not they are likely to engage in a certain behavior. It includes their own attitudes about the behavior as well as their perceptions of others' (peers, parents, partner, etc.) approval or disapproval of the behavior. Finally, the person must believe they have the ability, confidence and control to engage in the behavior.

Best Practices includes strategies to:

- 1) Promote positive attitudes around both abstinence and using protection to prevent STIs and pregnancy.
- 2) Explore social norms and influences on one's decisions and behaviors.
- 3) Build skills, confidence and self-efficacy to be sexually healthy.

IS *BEST PRACTICES* AN EVIDENCE-BASED CURRICULUM?

The original *Best Practices* (2002) was a compilation of lessons and activities found in other evidence-based HIV prevention programs. Although it did not undergo a formal, rigorous evaluation, *Best Practices* was reviewed and identified by a team of experts as a *Promising Program* in 2008, which means that the design, contents and methodology adheres to the *Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs* (Kirby, Roller and Wilson, 2007).

This review process was repeated during the 2016 revision of *Best Practices*, in collaboration with Maine Family Planning, the Department of Education and a consultant from Healthy Teen Network using the *Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs*. Based on its adherence to this research-based set of criteria of effective programs, *Best Practices* is considered an evidence-informed curriculum.

This 2020 edition of *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* adheres to the same set of characteristics of effective programs and is aligned with the Maine Health Education Standards and the National Sexuality Education Standards, authored by the Future of Sex Education.

THE HEALTH LITERATE MAINE STUDENT

Achievement of the health education standards within the Maine Learning Results means students graduate able to successfully practice behaviors that protect and promote health and avoid or reduce health risks as well as access credible and accurate information, products and services for assistance with health issues. This includes comprehensive sexual health education defined in legislation as:

“Comprehensive family life education” means education in kindergarten to grade 12 regarding human development and sexuality, including education on family planning and sexually transmitted diseases, that is medically accurate and age appropriate; that respects community values and encourages parental communication; that develops skills in communication, decision making and conflict resolution; that contributes to healthy relationships; that promotes responsible sexual behavior with an emphasis on abstinence; that addresses the use of contraception; that promotes individual responsibility and involvement regarding sexuality; and that teaches skills for responsible decision making regarding sexuality.

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec1902.html>.

In 2019, the Maine legislature passed a law requiring instruction in affirmative consent, communication and decision making regarding sexual activity.

Health and Physical Education

*“The secondary course of study must include instruction in health, safety and physical education, as prescribed by the commissioner, and physiology and hygiene, with special reference to the effects of alcoholic drinks, stimulants and narcotics upon the human system. **The secondary course of study must also include instruction on affirmative consent, communication and decision making regarding sexual activity and the effects of alcoholic drinks, stimulants and narcotics on the ability to give affirmative consent, communicate and make appropriate decisions. For purposes of this section, “affirmative consent” means consent to sexual activity that can be revoked at any time and does not include silence, lack of resistance or consent given while intoxicated.**”*

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec4723.html>.

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

The 2020 edition of *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* consists of 10 lessons that contain skill-based, interactive activities using a variety of teaching methods. Examples include small group work, facilitated brainstorms and discussions, debriefs and reflections, video and on-line tools, presentations and mini-lectures, quizzes and worksheets, scenarios and role-plays, skill-building activities and the use of technology.

Each lesson begins with a title page that outlines the Purpose and Student Learning Objectives covered in the lesson. In the Lesson Summary, the activities are listed in a grid indicating the estimated amount of time needed to complete each activity and a checklist of materials and preparation required prior to delivering the lesson. This summary serves as a guide for educators for the materials and preparation they will need to do before implementing each lesson.

Student worksheets, handouts, facilitator keys, scenarios, activity cards and diagrams are included with each activity and are designed to be easy and inexpensive to use and reproduce. All videos referenced are available on the internet for free and should be reviewed before showing them in class. Most lessons require a whiteboard or easel paper and markers.

Most lessons can be delivered in a 60-minute session. Several lessons contain activities that, if done in their entirety, may require up to 75 minutes. Educators have the flexibility to adjust certain activities by assigning students to complete work online or outside of class as homework. Activities indicated with a backpack icon can be provided as homework and include viewing on-line videos or websites, completing certain reflection activities and researching specific topics. If assigning activities outside of class, educators should set aside time during the following class period to review, debrief or have students present what they've learned. This will ensure that all students have complete, accurate information and an opportunity to debrief and hear key messages before moving on to the next lesson.

Each activity includes a teacher script in bold. This sample dialogue includes the key messages that reflect an inclusive, non-judgmental tone as well as medically accurate information. As you become more familiar and comfortable with the content, we encourage you to find your own voice in delivering these key messages.

Facilitator questions posed to students during brainstorming or as debriefing activities include prompts or suggested follow-up comments. These prompts will help spark conversation and engage students while also reinforcing the key messages, positive attitudes and intentions. Facilitator notes appear throughout the curriculum where background information may be needed or when special facilitation instructions would be helpful.

The anonymous question box is introduced in Lesson 1, and should be incorporated throughout the curriculum. If confronted with a question to which you don't know the answer, you and your students can find medically accurate information that is delivered in a factual and objective way by visiting the resources available on our For Educators resource page <https://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/sex-education-resources/>. Contact education@mainefamilyplanning.org for additional resources or access our *Answering Student Questions* tip sheet at <https://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/teaching-materials/>.

In addition, relevant and up to date data on Maine teen sexual behaviors can be found on the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey website, <https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/>.

Visit <http://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/teaching-materials/> for supplemental lessons and activities, tip sheets, tools and other resources to enhance your comprehensive sexuality education unit. The <http://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators> webpage also includes related web resources.

HOW MAINE FAMILY PLANNING CAN HELP

Maine Family Planning's (MFP) Prevention Program is available to assist educators in implementing comprehensive sex education, including implementing or adapting the *Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention* curriculum to fit your needs, students and classroom setting. Below are some ways MFP can support your sexual health education programming:

- **Getting Started** – MFP's Prevention Program staff can work with you to identify the sexual health needs of the youth you serve and support you in establishing a comprehensive sexual health education program. This includes research and data supporting comprehensive sexuality education and talking points for decision-makers, administrators and parents.
- **On-the-Ground Assistance** – MFP can help you review and update curricula, finding additional lessons on topics not covered in *Best Practices*, adapting current lessons for diverse populations and modes of learning, modeling lesson plans and meeting or assessing state and national health education standards and requirements.

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- **Professional Development** – MFP’s ongoing trainings, workshops and conferences keep educators up-to-date on relevant topics related to sexual health and other youth-oriented prevention topics. Education e-newsletters and e-blasts provide updates on new information, resources and upcoming professional development opportunities. To receive these e-newsletters and updates, contact education@mainefamilyplanning.org.
 - **Sharing Results** - MFP can share student assessment tools you can use to help ensure sexual health education has a positive impact on youth knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. This valuable feedback can also help improve the sexual health education you deliver
 - **Community Outreach** – *Best Practices* is not all-inclusive of the many sexual health and prevention related topics you may be providing to your students. MFP can help connect you with local resources to supplement your work and support healthier outcomes among youth.

GUEST SPEAKERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Guest speakers can be an important part of the educational experience for students by helping students build important connections between what they are learning and the insight, experience, knowledge and perspective of the guest speaker. Bringing in speakers virtually, or in-person, can also fill gaps or provide depth and nuance to the *Best Practices* curriculum activities. For more information and tips on effectively utilizing guest speakers, view the **Tips for Using Guest Speakers** on page x.

TRAINING

Whether you’ve been teaching sexual health for years or are just beginning, education and training will help you stay current with new information and resources and provide an opportunity to share ideas and experiences with other educators. Maine Family Planning and the Maine Department of Education offer professional development opportunities on *Best Practices* and related sexuality education topics to further facilitator knowledge, comfort level and skills in delivering sexual health education. For more information about upcoming professional development opportunities, contact education@mainefamilyplanning.org.

FEEDBACK ABOUT *BEST PRACTICES*

As the number and frequency of updates to *Best Practices* indicate, what we know and how we teach sexual health keeps evolving. It is our hope that this curriculum will be offered to as many young people as possible in Maine and that *Best Practices* can be modified and improved over time with the experience and insights we receive directly from youth and adults working with youth. *Best Practices* will be updated as new medical and other pertinent information becomes available, ensuring that the curriculum stays relevant and continues to provide young people with all the information and tools they need to make sexually healthy decisions. Any suggestions or feedback on this curriculum can be sent to education@mainefamilyplanning.org.

Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention

LESSON SUMMARIES

LESSON 1- TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH

The first lesson sets the stage for building a safe, trusting environment for students to learn about sexual health. After an icebreaker and establishing group agreements, students develop a common understanding of sexual health by defining sexuality terms. An interactive trivia game introduces topics addressed in the curriculum. The lesson concludes with an introduction to the anonymous question box, which can be used throughout the curriculum lessons.

LESSON 2- MAKING DECISIONS

Students begin the lesson by reflecting on their future goals and discussing the various messages they receive around sex. They then apply this information by responding to scenarios, brainstorming why people may choose not to have sex and identifying what is needed to make abstinence work effectively. The final reflection provides an opportunity for students to apply the information to their own lives. An optional activity addresses how the developing brain may impact sexual risk-taking and decision making.

LESSON 3- COMMUNICATION AND CONSENT

This lesson builds communication skills to express personal boundaries and respect others' boundaries in both sexual and non-sexual situations. After identifying the characteristics of passive, aggressive and assertive communication styles, students use scenarios to practice using assertive statements in communicating boundaries. Finally, students learn what affirmative consent means, what consent sounds like and how to identify and practice affirmative consent.

LESSON 4- SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Students participate in an activity that demonstrates how easily a virus can spread and how abstinence and barrier methods, like condoms and oral dams, can lower the risk of transmission. By watching a video and taking a quiz, students clarify STI myths and facts and use valid, online resources to research current STI and HIV information.

LESSON 5- BARRIER METHODS

This lesson builds comfort and skills in the proper use of external and internal condoms and oral dams. Through activities that demonstrate proper condom and oral dam use and exploring ways to overcome common challenges to barrier use, students gain communication skills, knowledge and confidence to use a method that will protect themselves and a partner from unintended pregnancy and STIs.

LESSON 6—WHAT'S THE RISK?

Through a role-play story, students explore responsibility for communicating about and preventing STIs and the importance of regular STI testing. Students identify and categorize, along a risk continuum, the sexual behaviors and attitudes that put a person at risk for STIs. Finally, students reflect on questions as they relate to how an STI may impact their own lives and identify local resources available for testing and treatment.

LESSON 7 – BIRTH CONTROL METHODS

Students examine their attitudes and perceptions about birth control methods and review how pregnancy happens. They then explore various birth control methods through a match-up activity or by using valid web resources to research and report out on the range and variety of birth control methods commonly used by teens. They apply the information they learn through scenarios of fictitious youth who are making personal decisions around birth control use and identifying where they can go for services.

LESSON 8—HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Students identify the signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships and use flash cards to place healthy versus unhealthy characteristics of relationships along a continuum. Students define characteristics of healthy relationships and what those characteristics may look like, defining for themselves what they want in their own relationships. Students participate in a carousel activity to identify components and strategies of conflict resolution and identify where they can go on line and in their community for support with relationship issues.

LESSON 9—ACCESSING SERVICES & SUPPORT

Students identify trusted adults and local and web based resources they might access for sexual health and related information. They analyze scenarios and identify ways to overcome common barriers many young people face in accessing services. Students practice skills for accessing resources by completing a script for making and preparing for a sexual health appointment.

LESSON 10—HEALTHY FUTURES

Students view the Maine-based film, *Two Seconds*, in which youth navigate three sexual health situations – an unplanned pregnancy, an STI diagnosis and an abusive dating relationship. Students identify risk and protective factors, on both an individual and an environmental level, and ways to address risk factors within their school community to promote a safe, healthy culture for everyone. Applying the knowledge they’ve learned throughout the *Best Practices* lessons, students respond to questions submitted to a fictitious advice column and reflect on what they’ve learned as they write words of wisdom to their future selves.

TIPS FOR USING GUEST SPEAKERS

While guest speakers can be an impactful addition to your sexual health unit, it requires time and preparation to be effective. Start planning with your administrator, other school staff and the guest speaker early on in your sexual health unit to ensure a smooth process.

1. Where a Guest Speaker can Support the *Best Practices* Curriculum

Below are some ways a guest speaker could fit within the *Best Practices* curriculum

- **Lesson 1:** Invite a guest speaker panel composed of individuals with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations to describe what sexual health means to them.
- **Lesson 4:** Arrange for a guest speaker who is who is living with HIV or works with people living with HIV.
- **Lesson 7:** Identify a guest speaker who is or was a teen parent to share their experience.
- **Lesson 3 or 8:** A guest speaker from a sexual violence or domestic violence prevention organization can provide more in-depth information on healthy relationships, intimate partner violence or sexual assault prevention and services available.
- **Lesson 9:** A guest speaker from a family planning agency can explain sexual and reproductive health services available and answer questions students may have.

2. Steps for Bringing in a Guest Speaker

- Consider how the speaker will enhance your sexual health curriculum and where you think a guest speaker may be most helpful.
- Consider what you want your students to take away from the experience. What are the objectives of the guest speaker presentation?
- Talk with your building administrator and follow protocol for guest speakers. If there is no protocol for having a speaker, ask your administrator what steps you should follow (i.e. parents/guardian notification). Provide a brief bio of the guest speaker to your administrator and explain how their presentation will enhance student learning.
- Reach out to potential guest speakers. The table on page xii offers a list of Maine organizations that might be able to provide or connect you to a guest speaker. Explain the purpose of the guest speaker presentation so you can be connected to the most appropriate person. Find a time that works for both the guest speaker and your class schedule(s).
- Provide information to your guest speaker about what your students are learning, what topics you will have covered prior to the guest speaker coming in, and any expectations, restrictions or relevant situations that may have occurred at your school related to the topic.
- Prepare your students for the guest speaker ahead of time and process the presentation and information with students after the guest speaker's presentation.

3. Information to Share with a Guest Speaker

- Ask the guest speaker for background information that you can use to prepare students before the visit.
- Discuss what preparation the students receive before their visit, including any questions students have so the guest speaker can be prepared to address them.
- Provide a copy of your classroom agreements so that the guest speaker knows the expectations to follow and how they can refer to the agreements, as needed.
- Ask the speaker if there are parameters and topic areas that they are willing to share or not share (i.e., personal or other information they do not want to or cannot share).
- Share school protocols, procedures or restrictions they should know about.

4. Preparing Students for Guest Speakers

- Inform students in advance of the guest speaker's visit. Provide background on the speaker, why they are coming in and what topics they will cover.
- Brainstorm with students questions they may want to ask the guest speaker.
- Let students know what your expectations are for their behavior when the guest speaker is presenting (i.e., that they pay attention, listen to and are respectful of the speaker).
- Review class agreements in preparation for the speaker. Remind students that the speaker is giving their time to come to the class and discuss their experience and expertise.

Organizations for Potential Guest Speakers

ORGANIZATION	DESCRIPTION AND WEB ADDRESS	LOCATION
LGBTQ rights, gender identity, sexual orientation		
Equality Maine	LGBTQ+ Serving Organization https://www.equalitymaine.org/	Portland
Maine Transgender Network	Transgender Support, Services, and Education https://www.mainetrans.net/	Statewide
Out Maine	LGBTQ+ Youth Serving Organization https://www.outmaine.org/	Rockland
Support for people living with HIV		
Frannie Peabody Center	HIV Case Management https://peabodycenter.org/	Portland
Health Equity Alliance	HIV Case Management Services, Substance Use Services, LGBTQ+ Services https://www.mainehealthequity.org/	Bangor, Ellsworth, Machias, Belfast
Horizon Program	HIV Case Management Services https://www.maine-general.org/medical-services/hiv-aids-services/	Augusta
Portland Public Health - India Street Clinic	HIV, STI, Hepatitis C and Substance Use Services https://www.portlandmaine.gov/399/India-Street-Public-Health-Center	Portland
Gender Empowerment		
Hardy Girls Healthy Women	Leadership for Girls https://hghw.org/	Waterville, Portland
Maine Boys to Men	Reducing Sexism and Violence Program https://www.maineboystomen.org/programs.php	Falmouth
Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services		
Mabel Wadsworth Center	Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Provider https://www.mabelwadsworth.org/	Bangor
Maine Family Planning	Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Provider https://mainefamilyplanning.org/for-educators/	Statewide
Planned Parenthood	Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Provider https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/me	Southern Maine
Dating Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention and Consent		
MCEDV	Domestic Violence/Dating Violence Prevention and Response (connect with your local resource center) https://www.mcedv.org/	Statewide
MECASA	Sexual Violence Prevention and Response (connect with your local resource center) https://www.mecasa.org/	Statewide
Speak About It	Healthy Relationships, Consent and Sexual Violence Prevention Education http://speakaboutitonline.com/	Portland

Best Practices in STI/HIV and Pregnancy Prevention

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Supplemental lessons, additional resources and downloadable *Best Practices* materials can be found at www.mainequalityplanning.org/for-educators/

