



*Working  
with*

# YOUTH IN CARE

A Toolkit by  maine family planning





## Maine Family Planning Clinics

### Augusta

43 Gabriel Dr., Augusta, ME 04330

### Bangor

68 Mt. Hope Ave., Bangor, ME 04401

### Belfast

147 Waldo Ave., Belfast, ME 04915

### Calais

10 Barker St., Suite D, Calais, ME 04619

### Damariscotta

767 Main St., Damariscotta, ME 04543

### Dexter

311 Corinna Rd., Dexter, ME 04930

### Ellsworth

248 State St., Ellsworth, ME 04605

### Farmington

193 Front St., Farmington, ME 04938

### Fort Kent

139 Market St., Fort Kent, ME 04743

### Houlton

91 Military St., Houlton, ME 04730

### Lewiston

179 Lisbon St., Lewiston, ME 04240

### Machias

247 Main St., Machias, ME 04654

### Norway

9 Marston St., Norway, ME 04268

### Presque Isle

5 Martin St., Presque Isle, ME 04769

### Rockland

22 White St., Rockland, ME 04841

### Rumford

218 Penobscot St., Rumford, ME 04276

### Skowhegan

188 Madison Ave., Skowhegan, ME 04976

### Waterville

18 Silver St., Waterville, ME 04901



## **Introduction & Table of Contents**

The Maine Youth in Care Bill of Rights states that young people in foster, adoptive, and kinship care have the right to learn about their sexuality in a safe and supportive environment. The Working with Youth in Care Toolkit is designed to help make that right a reality.

Inside, you will find helpful tips and conversation starters, clear definitions, and further resources to help you support youth in care as they navigate their sexual and reproductive health needs. From birth control and pregnancy prevention to gender identity and sexual orientation, these pages will help you answer tough questions with knowledge and compassion.

Maine Family Planning is committed to ensuring every young person in Maine has access to comprehensive sexuality education, no matter where or under what circumstances they live. Using the Working with Youth in Care Toolkit, we can empower under-served young people to make healthy decisions and build the lives and futures they envision.

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## Maine Youth in Care Bill of Rights

When it comes to sexual health, youth in care deserve open, honest information and support.

Maine youth, including those in state care, have the right to information and medical care related to sexual health without requiring a parent/guardian's consent or notification. These Maine laws help to ensure that young people are able to access care and make informed decisions about their sexual health. By sharing the information in this toolkit, you can help youth in care achieve these rights and promote healthy sexuality and decision-making.

As an adult supporting youth in care, you play an important role in helping young people stay healthy and informed.

The *Maine Youth in Care Bill of Rights* states that every foster child:

- » Shall be allowed to discover and express their gender and sexual identity regardless of placement, and shall not be subjected to discrimination or fear for their safety because of their gender or sexual identity. (1.4)
- » Shall be educated on the components of healthy romantic relationships through a supportive adult. (1.6)
- » Has the right to learn about their sexuality in a safe and supportive environment. (1.7)
- » Shall receive health care and services that are fair, respectful, safe, confidential, and free from discrimination. (6.6)





## Keep in Mind



- » Many adults find it difficult to talk with a young person about sexual health. This could be due to personal or religious beliefs, lack of information or comfort, or not having established a trusted relationship with the young person.
- » If you are not able to have a conversation with a young person about accessing sexual health services, help facilitate or encourage them to talk with an adult they trust.
- » Consider connecting with a Youth Transition Specialist and ask them to be part of team meetings.
- » Many young people aren't comfortable accessing needed health services. Youth in care may also have had negative experiences with the health care system.
- » Be aware of Maine laws and agency procedures on mandated reporting to keep youth safe from exploitation.
- » You may not have all the answers, but you can help a young person find the answers, point them in the right direction, and connect them to information and services.

## Messages for Youth



- » You have rights as a minor in Maine to access sexual health information and services without needing permission or consent from an adult.
- » These services include birth control and pregnancy testing; pregnancy options counseling; abortion care; and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.
- » Sexual health services are confidential—meaning they are private. It is up to you to decide if you want to share this information with others.
- » I am here to support you, and I am also here to keep you safe. If you are in a situation where you may be harmed, or cause harm to yourself or others, I will need to involve other people.
- » If you do not have a trusted adult in your life, I am here to support you.

## Conversation Starters

- » *Who do you rely on when you need help?*
- » *Do you have a trusted adult in your life you could talk to about your sexual health?*
- » *Do you know where your local resources are for sexual health?*
- » *Do you feel comfortable talking to your health care provider about your sexual health?*
- » *Are there ways I can help you access health services?*
- » *Do you need a ride to the doctor or help making an appointment?*

## RESOURCES

Maine Family Planning offers a range of affordable sexual health services.

Refer to page 2 for a full list of Maine Family Planning clinics across the state of Maine.

You can also visit **mainefamilyplanning.org** or call **(207) 922-3222** for more information about services, to find clinic locations, make an appointment online, or chat with a family planning professional.

Information about other organizations that serve and support Maine youth can be found throughout this toolkit.



## Healthy Relationships

Relationships play an important role in a person's sexual health.

One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence ([loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)).

As an adult supporting youth in care, you can play an important role in helping a young person identify the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships and supporting them in their ability to navigate friendships and intimate relationships.

### Keep in Mind



- » The ability for a young person to form healthy relationships is influenced by family, past trauma, media exposure, and personal relationships.
- » Many young people lack the comfort and experience to set and discuss boundaries in their relationships.
- » Youth may also lack effective communication skills and rely on social media and texting. You can help a young person by discussing effective ways to communicate with a friend or partner.
- » There are many reasons why it is difficult to recognize abuse or leave abusive relationships. Do not judge. Help a young person identify aspects of their relationship that may be harmful and brainstorm resources for addressing them.
- » Youth report that it can be difficult for them to identify healthy and unhealthy qualities in their relationships. They want adults to tell them when they see relationship qualities that are harmful. Even if the young person doesn't see it, or resists it at first, it's important for adults to say something.
- » Explore with youth ways they can identify or give consent in their relationships.
- » Help youth understand the impact of alcohol and drug use in communicating with a partner and being able to give and recognize consent in sexual situations.





## Messages for Youth

- » Healthy relationships are built on equality and respect and can take a lifetime to develop.
- » It's important to identify a trusted adult to help you in difficult relationship situations.
- » Arguing or disagreeing with a partner is normal. Using put-downs, controlling language, or physical aggression with a partner is unhealthy.
- » Walking away from a fight and telling your partner you need space to clear your mind is a healthy way to deal with conflict.
- » Just because you may have experienced bad relationships does not mean you deserve them.
- » It is everyone's responsibility in a relationship to make sure that there is consent.
- » It is your decision to be or not to be sexually active. This is true regardless of your past sexual experiences.
- » You should not feel pressured or pressure someone else to have sex.

## Conversation Starters

- » *Do you feel safe in your relationship?*
- » *Do you feel your relationship is equal and you treat each other with respect?*
- » *Do you have someone you can talk to when you are having relationship problems?*
- » *What are healthy ways you can manage and resolve conflict in a relationship?*
- » *How do you know if your partner is consenting to sexual activity?*
- » *What can you do if you change your mind about having sex with someone?*
- » *Is there something I can do to help?*



## RESOURCES

### Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault

mecasa.org provides a list of sexual assault support centers around the state, a sexual assault helpline, and a chat feature on their website.

(800) 871-7741

### Loveisrespect.org

provides resources for an individual to assess their own relationship, as well as tips for a friend, parent, or trusted adult to discuss healthy relationships with youth. Information is available on how childhood trauma can have an impact on relationships.

**Love is Respect** offers a helpline through chat, phone, and by texting LOVEIS to 22522.

(866) 331-9474



## Birth Control & Pregnancy Prevention

Youth in care have the right to make their own sexual and reproductive health decisions. This includes deciding whether and when to have sex and accessing confidential sexual and reproductive health services.

As an adult supporting youth in care, you can play an important role in ensuring that young people are aware of their rights and have the information and ability to access birth control and reproductive health services.

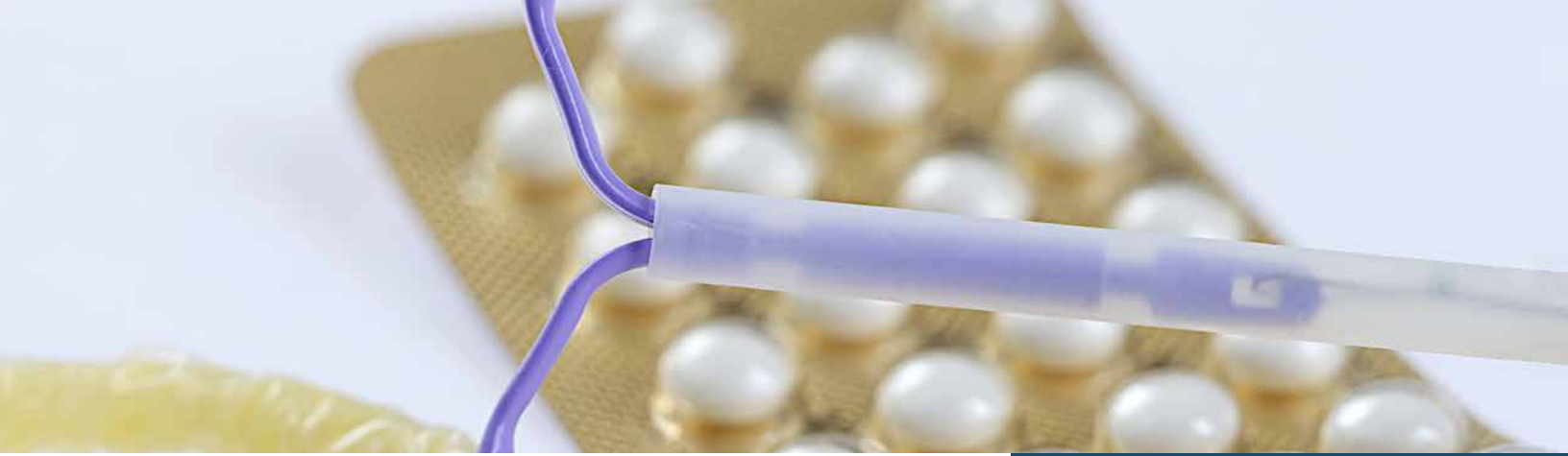
### Keep in Mind



- » Birth control options change over time. What is right for one person may not be right for someone else. It is important that a teen is able to discuss with a qualified health professional what method might work best for them.
- » In most cases, adolescents are not required to have a physical exam before they start a method of birth control, which is important for people who have experienced trauma or past sexual abuse.
- » Some methods of birth control, like an implant or IUD, are less visible and require fewer visits to a health care provider. This can be beneficial for youth who may experience frequent changes in their living situations.
- » People in abusive or unequal relationships are not as likely to advocate for birth control use. Some partners may also tamper with their birth control methods, resulting in higher rates of unintended pregnancy.
- » Communities of color and other minority groups experience medical mistrust resulting from historical injustices that are still present today. Be mindful of this when discussing birth control and healthcare options with youth who may seem resistant.

**NOTE:** Most sexual health exams, birth control methods, and pregnancy prevention services are covered by MaineCare.



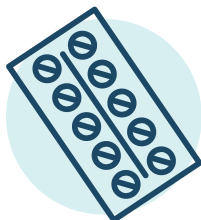
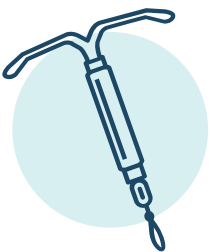


## Messages for Youth

- » If you are interested in pregnancy prevention, there are many methods to choose from: hormonal, barrier, and behavioral.
- » Hormonal birth control methods do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- » Protect yourself and your partner by using birth control and barrier methods to prevent **both** pregnancy and STIs at the same time.
- » Health insurance plans, including MaineCare, cover most birth control options.
- » Family planning clinics offer services on a sliding fee scale for people who do not have insurance, or who do not want to use their insurance to protect their privacy.
- » **Emergency contraception (EC)** can prevent pregnancy up to 5 days after unprotected sex and works in the same way as birth control pills by preventing a pregnancy. EC is not the same as the abortion pill.

## Conversation Starters

- » *Do you know how someone can become pregnant or cause a pregnancy?*
- » *Do you have information about the ways someone can prevent pregnancy?*
- » *Are you able to talk to your partner about pregnancy prevention?*
- » *Have you thought about if or when you want to be a parent?*
- » *Have you thought about what you would do if you became pregnant (got someone pregnant)?*
- » *Can I help you find a trusted health care provider you can talk to about birth control options?*



## RESOURCES

**Maine Family Planning**  
(207) 922-3222  
[mainefamilyplanning.org](http://mainefamilyplanning.org)

**Planned Parenthood of Northern New England**  
(866) 476-1321  
[plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england](http://plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england)

**Bedsider**  
[Bedsider.org](http://Bedsider.org)

## Emergency Contraception (EC)

Emergency contraception (EC) can be used up to 120 hours after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy. For example; if a condom breaks, no birth control was used, and in cases of sexual assault. EC is not the abortion pill and will not harm an existing pregnancy.

Youth of any age or gender can buy emergency contraception at a pharmacy without a prescription. There are different types of EC that are available at family planning clinics at a lower cost. More information about EC can be found at:

[ec.princeton.edu](http://ec.princeton.edu)



## Pregnant & Parenting Youth

Youth in care have the right to make their own reproductive decisions, including if and when to become a parent.

As an adult supporting youth in care, you can play an important role in helping a young person determine their reproductive life plan, including preventing, spacing, or planning for a healthy pregnancy.

Teen pregnancy and birth rates have continued to decline nationally, and in Maine, due to increased access to information and services. At the same time, there are disparities in youth populations where teen pregnancy rates are still high. Youth in foster care are twice as likely as their peers to have a child by the age of 19.

### Keep in Mind



- » Support all young people equally, regardless of their identified gender, in conversations about sexual and reproductive health, pregnancy, and parenting. This will establish a sense of equal responsibility and accountability.
- » Pregnant youth should be aware of all of their pregnancy options, including abortion, adoption, and parenting.
- » If you do not feel comfortable or knowledgeable about discussing all pregnancy options and resources, identify someone to continue this discussion with a pregnant youth.
- » If a young person becomes pregnant, keep your reaction neutral. Avoid using language that shows either disappointment or congratulations.
- » Respect a young person's responsibility in making a pregnancy decision that is best for them. Provide support regardless of their decision.
- » Regardless of how we might feel about teen pregnancy, when properly supported, many youth are capable of parenting.
- » Many youth in care who become pregnant worry about losing custody. Address the potential challenges and supports they need in becoming a parent.

**NOTE:** Most services for pregnant teens, including pregnancy testing, abortion related services, and pre-natal and delivery care, are covered by MaineCare.



## Messages for Youth

- » If you are pregnant, you have the right to decide the outcome of your pregnancy—whether that decision is abortion, adoption, or becoming a parent.
- » Both partners in a relationship have equal responsibility for preventing unplanned pregnancy, as well as the responsibilities of becoming a parent.
- » Becoming a parent is challenging. There are supports available to help you.

## Conversation Starters

- » *Have you thought about your options with the pregnancy?*
- » *Do you have a trusted adult you can talk to about your options?*
- » *How can I help you find answers to your questions so you can make the best decision for yourself?*
- » *Do you know where you could go for pre-natal care?*
- » *Do you need help getting to or making a doctor's appointment?*

**NOTE:** Crisis Pregnancy Centers do not support pregnant youth who may be considering abortion. **These Centers are not licensed medical providers and do not provide unbiased, accurate information for pregnant youth considering their full range of pregnancy options.**



## RESOURCES

### Unbiased Pregnancy Options Counseling

[pregnancyoptions.info](http://pregnancyoptions.info)  
[mainefamilyplanning.org](http://mainefamilyplanning.org)  
[mabelwadsworth.org](http://mabelwadsworth.org)  
[plannedparenthood.org](http://plannedparenthood.org)

### Abortion Services

Minors in Maine have the right to access abortion services without requiring parent/guardian permission.

### Maine Family Planning

(207) 922-3222  
[mainefamilyplanning.org](http://mainefamilyplanning.org)

### Mabel Wadsworth

(207) 947-5337  
(800) 948-5337  
[mabelwadsworth.org](http://mabelwadsworth.org)

### Planned Parenthood of Northern New England

(866) 476-1321  
[plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england](http://plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england)

### Adoption Services

### Adoption Partners of Maine

(844) 300-LOVE (5683)  
[adoptionpartnersofmaine.org](http://adoptionpartnersofmaine.org)

### Programs Supporting Teen Parents

### Good Samaritan

[goodsamaritanbangor.org](http://goodsamaritanbangor.org)

### Maine Children's Home

[mainechildrenshome.org](http://mainechildrenshome.org)

### Maine Families

[mainefamilies.org](http://mainefamilies.org)



## Sexually Transmitted Infections

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common, and the rates of STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis are increasing. In the U.S., half of all new STI cases are in people under 25 years old.

As an adult supporting youth in care, you can play an important role in helping youth understand their risk and identifying ways to get tested.

### Keep in Mind



- » Many teens are unaware of the behaviors that can put them at risk for STIs.
- » If you are working with a youth who has an STI, it is important to destigmatize diagnosis and treatment and encourage partner communication. Avoid using shaming language, and acknowledge that many people will contract an STI during their lifetime.
- » A history of trauma can impede decision-making and increase feelings of shame around a positive STI diagnosis.
- » STIs do not discriminate. Many people from all walks of life experience or live with STIs.
- » The sooner an STI is identified and treated, the better the health outcome.
- » Testing is readily available and easy, but most health care providers do not automatically test for STIs.
- » People in abusive or unequal relationships are not as likely to advocate for condom use and have higher rates of STIs.

**NOTE:** Most services for testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections are covered by MaineCare.





## Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections

- » Not having sex or sharing needles is the most effective way to prevent STIs.
- » Barrier methods (like condoms) are very effective in preventing the spread of HIV and most STIs.
- » There is no age restriction on purchasing condoms and other barrier methods, and they are also available for **free** at family planning clinics throughout Maine.
- » There are condoms that are internal and external (AKA male and female condoms) that can be used for oral, anal, and vaginal sex.
- » Both condoms and oral dams can be used to prevent STIs during oral sex.

### Messages for Youth

- » Many people get STIs; it is not something that someone should be embarrassed or ashamed about.
- » STIs can be passed on through vaginal, oral, and anal sex.
- » There are STIs that can be cured; other STIs, like HIV, cannot be cured, but there are medications to manage symptoms.
- » Most testing for STIs involves a urine or finger stick blood test, and can be done easily at a doctor's office or family planning clinic.
- » Sexually active young people should be tested for STIs at least once a year, more often if there is a change of partners or if someone is worried that they have been exposed to an STI.
- » If you test positive for an STI, there are confidential ways to let your partner(s) know without giving them your name.

### Conversation Starters

- » *Do you have information about how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections? How can I help?*
- » *Being diagnosed with an STI is common; there is no reason to feel ashamed.*
- » *It is important for both partners to get tested for STIs.*
- » *If your partner gets angry or says they don't trust you when you say you want to get tested or use condoms, it could be a sign of an unhealthy relationship.*

**NOTE:** PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylactic, also known as Truvada) is a medication that is very effective at preventing HIV for someone who engages in unprotected sex, shares IV drugs, or is having sex with someone who is HIV positive.

### RESOURCES

**Get Yourself Tested**  
[cdc.gov/std/sam/gyt/knowthefacts.htm](https://cdc.gov/std/sam/gyt/knowthefacts.htm)

**American Sexual Health Association**  
[iwannaknow.org](https://www.iwannaknow.org)

**In addition to your doctor's office, these sites in Maine offer STI testing**

**Maine Family Planning**  
(207) 922-3222  
[mainefamilyplanning.org](https://mainefamilyplanning.org)

**Planned Parenthood of Northern New England**  
(866) 476-1321  
[plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england](https://plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-northern-new-england)

**Sites that offer confidential and anonymous HIV testing and case management for people living with HIV**

**Frannie Peabody, Portland**  
(207) 749-6818  
[peabodycenter.org](https://peabodycenter.org)

**Health Equity Alliance (HEAL)**  
[mainealthequity.org](https://mainealthequity.org)

**St. Mary's Regional Medical Center**  
(207) 777-8100

**MaineGeneral Horizon Program**  
(207) 621-3785





## Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

LGBTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual. The plus sign includes all the other terms people use to identify their gender and orientation. The vocabulary for the many ways people identify their sexual orientation and gender is expansive and keeps evolving. How someone identifies is up to the individual and should be respected.

As an adult supporting youth in care, you can play an important role in affirming and supporting LGBTQIA+ youth.

### Keep in Mind



- » Youth in care are more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+ than their peers who are not in care.
- » Trauma does not cause someone to identify as LGBTQIA+. Youth who identify as LGBTQIA+ are at higher risk of abuse, neglect, homelessness, and trafficking.
- » Many teens are not comfortable sharing their gender identity or sexual orientation, or may still be exploring those aspects of their identity.
- » Do not make assumptions about a young person's sexual orientation or identity.
- » Don't surprise a young person by asking them about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Consider your motivation for asking: *What is the importance of knowing? Why do I need this information?*
- » Always use gender inclusive language, such as "partner".
- » Be aware that there is a growing list of terminology around gender and orientation; honor someone's name or pronoun, even if it changes frequently.



## Messages for Youth

- » People may identify their gender and sexual orientation in many ways. All are okay.
- » Someone's gender identity or sexual orientation is part of who someone is, and not something someone chooses. People **can** choose how they express or present themselves to others.
- » It is not okay for someone to be treated unfairly, harassed, or bullied because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
- » There are resources in Maine where people who identify as LGBTQIA+ can be supported.
- » A person has a right to decide when, how, and with whom they want to share their gender identity or sexual orientation.

## Conversation Tips

Rather than starting a conversation with a young person about their gender or orientation, let a young person take the lead. Sharing information about their identity or orientation should be on their terms.

Ask all youth which name and pronouns they use. You can offer information about your personal pronouns. ***"Hi, I'm Sarah, my pronouns are she/her/hers. Would you like to share your pronouns?"***

They/Them/Theirs is a gender neutral way of referring to someone without making assumptions about the pronouns they use.

## Notes on Coming Out

- » Coming out is a process when someone shares their identity willingly with others.
- » It can be difficult each time a young person comes out to others about their gender identity or sexual orientation—particularly when they do not know who will be open and accepting.
- » It is not our place or right to "out" young people to others.
- » While coming out may be a relief to the young person, each time they share this information they are taking a risk of not being accepted or potentially harmed.
- » Documenting a young person's gender identity or sexual orientation may "out" them before they are ready and may be unsafe.

### If someone comes out to you:

- » Thank them and let them know they are brave for doing so.
- » Let them know that you accept and support them.
- » Find out if they want other people to know.
- » Remember that their gender/sexuality is just one part of who they are.
- » Ask how you can best support them.

## RESOURCES

### Organizations in Maine that support LGBTQIA+ youth

**OUT Maine**  
[outmaine.org](http://outmaine.org)

**Maine Trans Net**  
[mainetransnet.org](http://mainetransnet.org)

**Health Equity Alliance**  
[mainehealthequity.org](http://mainehealthequity.org)

**Portland Outright**  
[portlandoutright.org](http://portlandoutright.org)

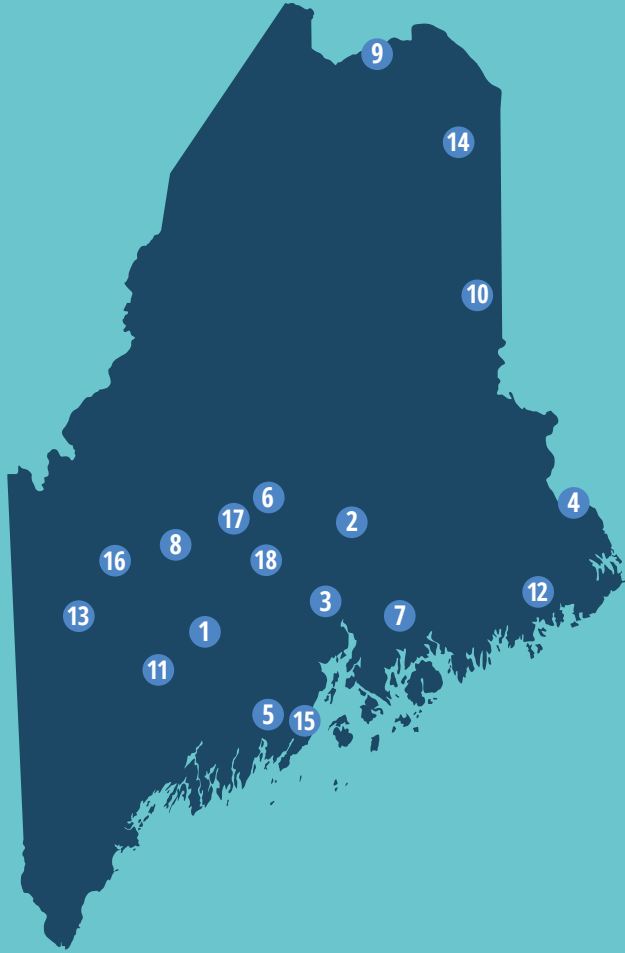
**Outright/Lewiston-Auburn**  
[outrightla.org](http://outrightla.org)

### Resources for LGBTQIA+ terminology

**The Safe Zone Project**  
[thesafezoneproject.com/resources/vocabulary/](http://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/vocabulary/)

**UC Davis**  
[lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary](http://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary)

# maine family planning



## Clinics

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1 Augusta</b><br>43 Gabriel Dr.                                    | <b>9 Fort Kent</b><br>139 Market St.    |
| <b>2 Bangor</b><br>68 Mt. Hope Ave.                                   | <b>10 Houlton</b><br>91 Military St.    |
| <b>3 Belfast</b><br>147 Waldo Ave.                                    | <b>11 Lewiston</b><br>179 Lisbon St.    |
| <b>4 Calais</b><br>10 Barker St.<br>Suite D                           | <b>12 Machias</b><br>247 Main St.       |
| <b>5 Damariscotta</b><br>Pine Grove Plaza<br>Route 1B<br>767 Main St. | <b>13 Norway</b><br>9 Marston St.       |
| <b>6 Dexter</b><br>311A Corinna Rd.                                   | <b>14 Presque Isle</b><br>5 Martin St.  |
| <b>7 Ellsworth</b><br>248 State St.<br>Suite 3A                       | <b>15 Rockland</b><br>22 White St.      |
| <b>8 Farmington</b><br>193 Front St.                                  | <b>16 Rumford</b><br>218 Penobscot St.  |
|   | <b>17 Skowhegan</b><br>188 Madison Ave. |
|   | <b>18 Waterville</b><br>18 Silver St.   |

## Quick Resources

**Sexual Health Services**  
mainefamilyplanning.org  
(207) 922-3222

**STI and HIV Testing Sites in Maine**  
bit.ly/2L9KY8E

**Sexual Assault Services**  
mecasa.org  
(800) 871-7741

**Legal Support**  
kidslegal.org

## Book an Appointment: (207) 922-3222

More information at [mainefamilyplanning.org](http://mainefamilyplanning.org)

 [MaineFamilyPlanning](https://www.facebook.com/MaineFamilyPlanning)

 [@FPAMaine](https://twitter.com/FPAMaine)

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