



# Latina/o Sex Education Action Kit

FACT SHEET

## Get the Facts!

### COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY AND REQUIREMENTS IN CALIFORNIA

#### **CALIFORNIA'S STUDENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION.**

In 2003, California passed SB 71, the "California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Act."<sup>1</sup> It effectively banned "abstinence-only" sex education and established guidelines for schools when providing "education regarding human development and sexuality, including education on pregnancy, family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases."<sup>2</sup>

#### **CALIFORNIA LATINAS WANT AND NEED COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION.**

- A survey of Latinas concerning their attitudes towards reproductive sexual health issues found that Latinas care about and want more access to sexuality education and reproductive health services.<sup>3</sup>
- HIV is the third leading cause of death for Latina women ages 25 to 44.
- The birth rate of Latina teens in California is three times higher than that of White teens.<sup>4</sup>
- While 80.5% of young women (ages 18-24) in California have heard of emergency contraception (EC), only 55.4% of young Latinas have heard of EC.<sup>5</sup>

#### **COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION ACTUALLY WORKS!**

The State of California recognizes the effectiveness of a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. Research demonstrates that programs that include information about both contraception and abstinence are effective while abstinence-only programs have not been proven effective in reducing unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).<sup>6</sup> For example, a recently-released evaluation of federally funded abstinence-until-marriage programs conducted on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education found that youth who participated in such programs were no more likely than youth not in the programs to have abstained from sex in the four to six years after they began participating in the study.<sup>7</sup> This is consistent with other research studies finding abstinence-only programs to be ineffective in protecting young people's sexual health.<sup>8</sup>

#### **UNFORTUNATELY, SCHOOLS ARE STILL NOT REQUIRED TO PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH SEX EDUCATION.**

The only instruction that schools are required to provide is HIV/AIDS prevention education, once in middle school and once in high school. **If schools choose to teach sex education, they must follow specific content criteria established in SB 71.**

#### **COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS MUST BE:**

- Age appropriate
- Medically accurate and objective
- Unbiased
- Appropriate for and accessible to pupils with disabilities
- Equally available to English language learners
- Teach respect for marriage and committed relationships
- Appropriate for use with pupils of all races, genders, sexual orientations, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Encourage students to communicate with their parents or guardians about human sexuality

### **IF SCHOOLS PROVIDE SEXUALITY EDUCATION, WHAT ARE THEY REQUIRED TO TEACH?**

Starting in the 7th grade, the curricula must cover effectiveness and safety of contraceptives, protection from STDs, as well as abstinence and decision-making. "Abstinence-only" curricula, which teaches that abstinence is the only option for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, is prohibited in California public schools.

### **SB 71 ALSO INCLUDES PROVISIONS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.**

The law requires that instruction be equally available to English learners and appropriate for use with students of all races, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The instruction must be consistent with the existing sex education curriculum.

### **PARENTS WILL CONTINUE TO BE NOTIFIED IF SCHOOLS WILL OFFER SEX EDUCATION.**

The law recognizes that while parents and guardians overwhelmingly support the teaching of medically accurate, comprehensive sex education in schools, they have the ultimate responsibility for teaching their children values regarding human sexuality. Hence, the law requires schools to notify parents or guardians at the beginning of the school year about planned sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention education. Parents or guardians must be given an opportunity to review materials and to request in writing that their child not participate in the instruction.

**CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY LATINAS/OS, STRONGLY SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION.** Californians across regions, racial and ethnic groups and religious affiliations -- including Latina/o adults -- overwhelmingly support comprehensive sexuality education. A new survey of California parents overall conducted by the Public Health Institute found that 90% of Latina/o parents and 89% of California parents support comprehensive sex education.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Public Policy Institute of California found that 83% of Latinos/as believe sexuality education is very important and 74% believe sexuality education programs should teach about abstinence, condoms, and contraceptives.<sup>10</sup>

*For more information about the importance of comprehensive sexuality education for the Latina/o community, please refer to CLRJ's Policy Backgrounder, "Sex Ed is a Reproductive Justice Issue," or contact: Rocio Cordoba, CLRJ's Executive Director, at 213-270-5258 or [rocio@clrj.org](mailto:rocio@clrj.org).*

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<sup>1</sup> California Education Code Chapter 5.6, Sections 51930, 51933-51935, 51937-51939. Available at [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/sen/sb\\_0051-0100/sb\\_71\\_bill\\_20031001\\_chaptered.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/sen/sb_0051-0100/sb_71_bill_20031001_chaptered.html)

<sup>2</sup> Education Code Section 51931 (b).

<sup>3</sup> Norma Ojeda, *The Two Californias: A Binational Survey of Attitudes Regarding Family Planning and Abortion*, Planned Parenthood of San Diego and Riverside Counties (2001).

<sup>4</sup> *No Time for Complacency*, 2006 Spring Update, Public Health Institute, Center for Research on Adolescent Health and Development. Available at <http://teenbirths.phi.org/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> *Health of California 2006* at 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Do Abstinence-Only Programs Delay the Initiation of Sex Among Young People and Reduce Teen Pregnancy?* The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Report, October 2002.

<sup>7</sup> *Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs*, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., April 2007. Available at [www.mathematica-mpr.com](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com).

<sup>8</sup> *What the Research Shows: Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs Don't Work*, American Civil Liberties Union Reproductive Freedom Fact Sheet, March 2007. Available at <http://aclu.org/reproductiverights/sexed>.

<sup>9</sup> *Sex Education: The Parent's Perspective ("Sex Ed Parents' Survey")*, Summary Report, Public Health Institute Center for Research on Adolescent Health and Development, May 2007.

<sup>10</sup> *Special Survey on Population*, Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Survey, December 2005. Available at <http://www.ppic.org>.