

FAMILY PLANNING NSW

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY 2020



1. POLICY STATEMENT

Family Planning NSW is committed to providing age-appropriate, evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education for all people across the lifespan. Our vision is to be a global leader in the provision of evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education.

Comprehensive sexuality education is learning that begins during early childhood, and continues throughout life, concerning the physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of reproductive and sexual health and rights, inclusive of sexuality and relationships.^{1,2} Considered to be a lifelong learning process, comprehensive sexuality education extends beyond the school curriculum² and should be accessible to all individuals regardless of age and their engagement with the education system.

Comprehensive sexuality education builds on and promotes an understanding of universal human rights, including the rights of women and girls, and the rights of all people to access health, education, and information equally and without discrimination.³ As a foundation for exercising reproductive rights, comprehensive sexuality education includes information about access to family planning services, the right to choose whether or not to have children, and the right to decide freely on the number, timing and spacing of these children.³

Access to comprehensive sexuality education is enshrined within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴ and is essential for the success of a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including:

- SDG 3** – Good Health and Well-being
- SDG 4** – Quality Education
- SDG 5** – Gender Equality
- SDG 10** – Reduced Inequalities

2. SCOPE

All Family Planning NSW staff.

3. POLICY DETAILS

Family Planning NSW recognises that:

- universal access to reproductive and sexual health services, including information and education, is essential to ensure the reproductive and sexual health and rights of all people across the lifespan
- comprehensive sexuality education contributes to a person’s ability to make informed decisions concerning relationships, sexuality and reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing by influencing attitudes and values including respect, equality and diversity^{2,6}
- comprehensive sexuality education is a crucial early intervention strategy to reduce gender-based violence, promote gender equality, and improve reproductive and sexual health outcomes^{2,5,6} including reducing unintended pregnancies, sexually transmissible infections and sexual risk taking behaviours⁴

Family Planning NSW believes that:

- all people should have access to age-appropriate, evidence-based and targeted comprehensive sexuality education that empowers individuals with knowledge and skills to encourage healthy and informed choices concerning their sexuality and wellbeing throughout their life
- comprehensive sexuality education should be available across the lifespan for all people and across all education and community settings and mediums
- the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education within national and international school curricula will support people to have healthier reproductive and sexual lives, free from stigma and discrimination
- community-based comprehensive sexuality education programs and clinical healthcare services are essential to provide education and information to those who are disengaged from the formal education system and should be designed to meet the needs of all populations, including diverse groups

- comprehensive sexuality education programs should align with current international best practice guidelines⁵
- comprehensive sexuality education programs should be well resourced, informed by best practice principles, evidence-based and underpinned by national policy and curricula
- educators and individuals, including health professionals, who deliver comprehensive sexuality education should be provided with relevant training and support to ensure evidence-based, current, confident and competent delivery
- acting in an advisory capacity to policymakers through providing expertise and evidence-based information to inform and support decision-makers
- conducting research that informs the quality of comprehensive sexuality education delivery and contributes to increasing understanding of best practice and benefits of comprehensive sexuality education

Family Planning NSW is committed to:

- advocating for legislative change within the Australian and international context to mandate governments to implement community and school-based comprehensive sexuality education programs
- providing a diverse range of evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education programs, resources, materials and clinical services to support all people to make informed choices regarding their own reproductive and sexual health, that meet the learning needs of the community, inclusive of people from marginalised populations
- providing ongoing training and professional development for educators and those involved in the delivery of comprehensive sexuality education
- advancing the reproductive and sexual health and rights of all people by recognising the specific education needs of all priority population groups, for example, people with a disability, gender and/or sexuality diverse people, vulnerable migrants and older people
- promoting approaches that ensure the consistent implementation and evaluation of evidence-based quality comprehensive sexuality education programs, including advocating for integration into national curricula
- collaborating with other organisations and networks to promote equitable access to comprehensive sexuality education programs, in Australia and globally
- engaging in public and professional discourse to educate legislators, educators and community members about, and advocate for, the essential nature of comprehensive sexuality education

REFERENCES

1. Family Planning Australia Alliance. Relationships and sexuality education in schools. Position statement. Sydney: Family Planning Australia Alliance, 2016.
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4. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. UNESCO strategy on education for health and well-being: Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals. France: UNESCO, 2016.
5. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Review of policies and strategies to implement and scale up: Sexuality education in Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok: UNESCO, 2012.
6. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. International technical guidance on sexuality education. Paris: UNESCO, 2018.