



Raising Healthy Youth: A Guide to Sexual Health Education for New Orleans Parents and Caregivers

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NOARHP



**THE
SHER
LAB**

Introduction

This guide was developed in collaboration between the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD), New Orleans Adolescent Reproductive Health Project (NOARHP), and The Sexual Health, Education & Rights (SHER) Lab. These organizations work to expand access to sex education for youth in New Orleans. The purpose of this guide is to provide parents and caregivers with practical, age-appropriate tools and local resources to support learning about sexual health.

New Orleans Health Department (NOHD)

The mission of NOHD is to foster a healthier New Orleans by implementing equitable policies, programs, and partnerships that promote and protect the well-being of all community members.

Instagram:
@nolahealthdept

Email:
ryann.martinek@nola.gov

Website:



New Orleans Adolescent Reproductive Health Project (NOARHP)

The mission of NOARHP is to promote access to comprehensive reproductive health education. NOARHP is affiliated with the LSU School of Medicine and the Tulane University School of Medicine.

Instagram:
@noarhp

Email:
noarhp.lsuhschool@gmail.com

Website:



The Sexual Health, Education & Rights (SHER) Lab

The lab is a coalition of community organizers and scholars that design, implement, and evaluate interventions related to reproductive rights and sexual health in Louisiana and the broader Deep South.

Instagram:
@thesherlab

Email:
sher.lab.nola@gmail.com

Website:



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Why Sex Education Matters and What You Can Do

What Is Sex Education?

Sex education provides medically accurate, age-appropriate information that helps youth understand their bodies and development. It can start in early childhood with foundational concepts such as anatomy and emotional learning skills, and later expand to more complex topics. **Sex education supports informed decision-making and critical thinking**, enabling young people to safely navigate their sexual health. This learning can happen in schools, at home, and in other community spaces.

Why Is It Important for Youth to Learn about Sexual Health?

Research shows that **sex education supports academic success, healthy relationships, health literacy, and self-esteem**, while increasing understanding of consent, bodily autonomy, and communication skills. **Sex education also reduces rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancy, sexual violence, and bullying.**^{1, 2, 3}

Local Data on Sexual Health Outcomes

Louisiana ranked first nationally in chlamydia, second in gonorrhea, and fourth in HIV based on the most recent CDC data from 2023. **In New Orleans, the majority of new cases of STIs are among youth ages 15–24,**⁵ and from 2022 to 2023, HIV cases among ages 15–19 increased 200 percent.⁶ The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) gave Louisiana an “F” for sex education, as **the state does not mandate school-based sex education.**⁷ These data indicate gaps in prevention efforts, educational resources, and health care access.⁸

Why Sex Education Matters and What You Can Do

How Do Youth Learn about Sexual Health?

Youth learn about sexual health from many sources, including some that may be unreliable, such as social media. Parents and caregivers have a valuable opportunity to provide accurate, supportive information.

School

Internet

Social media

Peers

Parents &
caregivers

Community

Health care
providers

Trusted
adults

And more!

What Is Your Role as a Parent or Caregiver?

Not all schools offer sex education, since it is not mandated by the state of Louisiana. Because of this, parents and caregivers play an important role in starting conversations about sexual health and well-being at home.

Talking about sex, dating, and relationships can feel uncomfortable at first. What matters most is creating a space where your child feels safe asking questions and knows they can come to you for answers. Remember that just because a child asks a question does not necessarily mean they are engaging in sexual behaviors. This guide is designed to help you navigate conversations about sexual health and connect your child to local youth-friendly resources.

Talking about Sexual Health

Recommended Sexual Health Topics by Age Group

Public health experts created the [National Sexuality Education Standards](#), which provide a list of recommended sex education topics by age group.⁹ **Example standards** are below;ⁱ while some topics overlap, content becomes more detailed with age.

Grades K-2:

- **Anatomy:** Identify body parts using medically accurate terms
- **Consent & friendships:** Understand personal boundaries
- **Other topics:** Respecting others, friendships, expressing feelings, talking to trusted adults

Grades 3-5:

- **Hygiene:** Make a plan for maintaining personal hygiene
- **Puberty:** Explain developmental changes during puberty
- **Other topics:** Anatomy, menstruation, connection between sexual intercourse & reproduction, consent, relationships

Grades 6-8:

- **Consent:** Define sexual consent and sexual agency
- **STI/HIV prevention:** Explain symptoms of STIs and HIV
- **Other topics:** Relationships, anatomy, puberty, gender identity and sexual orientation, menstruation, contraception, benefits of abstinence, health care screenings

Grades 9-12:

- **Gender & sexuality:** Differentiate sex assigned at birth, gender identity, and gender expression
- **Safe sex practices:** Compare contraceptive methods and make a plan with a partner to reduce the risk of STIs and pregnancy
- **Other topics:** Relationships, consent, gender and sexuality, anatomy, pregnancy, safe sex practices, contraception, health care screenings, digital health

ⁱThe standards listed for each age group are examples and do not represent all recommended topics. For a complete list, please refer to the [National Sexuality Education Standards](#).

Talking about Sexual Health

Navigating Discussions about Sexual Health

Check out these free resources to help you navigate discussions with your child about sexual health. **Resources highlighted in purple are available in multiple languages.**

Advocates for Youth – “Are You an Askable Parent?”
advocatesforyouth.org/resources/are-you-an-askable-parent/ – Provides guidance on being approachable and open to questions about sexual health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – “Talking with Your Teens About Sex” – tinyurl.com/y2w6dtju – Recommends discussion topics (e.g., HIV, STIs), outlines communication strategies, and links other resources

Talk More – “Starting Conversations & Answering Questions” – talk-more.org/starting-conversations – Encourages early conversations about sex to build trust and reduce stigma

American Sexual Health Association – “Be an Askable Parent” – ashasexualhealth.org/parents/ – Provides examples of when and where to start conversations about sexual health

Starting Conversations

Consider the tips below for starting conversations and talking to your child about sexual health:

- **Prepare:** Review key topics and resources in advance.
- **Where:** Find a quiet, comfortable space to start the conversation. Try a walk or a car ride.
- **Approach:** Use clear, easy-to-understand language.
- **Questions:** Encourage questions and respond warmly.
- **Future Conversations:** Keep discussions ongoing and remind your child they can talk with you anytime.

Talking about Sexual Health

Responding to Challenging Questions

Youth are often curious about bodies, relationships, and sex, and may have questions as they learn about these topics. When your child asks a difficult or unexpected question, consider these tips:

- **Affirm your child for asking.** Let them know it's okay to ask questions and welcome the opportunity for discussion.
- **Identify the motivation** behind the question.
- **Correct misinformation.** Offer to look up the question and get back to them with factual information.
- **Explore different perspectives.** Acknowledge that people may have a range of values about the topic. When sharing your personal values, present them alongside other perspectives. Consider the **SOY** method!
 - **S**ome people believe this...
 - **O**ther people believe this...
 - **Y**ou can ask questions and decide what you believe.

Understanding the Questions Your Child May Ask

Understanding why your child is asking a particular question can help you respond. Common underlying motivations for questions are listed below.

Information/clarification

“How does pregnancy happen?”

Am I normal?

“Is vaginal discharge normal?”

Shock or “Can I get you” questions

Questions meant to cause a reaction.

Permission seeking

“My friend started having sex a month after meeting her boyfriend. That’s too soon, right?”

Values based

“Is masturbation bad?”

Example Response

“Thank you for asking about this. Yes, vaginal discharge is often normal. However, discharge that is unusually smelly, discolored, or causes itching or pain may be a concern. Let me know if you notice these changes, and we can talk with a medical provider about it.”

Talking about Sexual Health

Tools to Learn Sexual Health Information

Take a look at the free sex education resources below, which you can review with your child. **Resources highlighted in purple are available in multiple languages.**

General Sex Education Content

Talk More – [Sex Education Curriculum Planner for Parents](https://talk-more.org/parent-planner) (Ages 0-18) – talk-more.org/parent-planner

Amaze – [Videos on Sex Education](https://amaze.org) (Ages 4+) – amaze.org

Planned Parenthood – ["Sex Ed To-Go" Online Courses for Youth](https://tinyurl.com/m2u765sj). (Ages 9+) – tinyurl.com/m2u765sj

Bedsider – [Contraception Education and Access Options](https://bedsider.org/) (Ages 18-29) – bedsider.org/

Mental Health & Healthy Relationships

Real Talk – [Safe App for Youth to Share Stories and Access Resources on Mental Health](https://myhealthed.org) (Ages 13+) – myhealthed.org

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine - [Mental Health Resources](https://tinyurl.com/4jdcfdn7) (Ages 13+) - tinyurl.com/4jdcfdn7

Love is Respect – [Educational Information on Healthy Relationships, Dating, and Personal Safety](https://loveisrespect.org) (Ages 13-26) – loveisrespect.org

LGBTQ+ Resources

Planet Puberty – [Educational Guide on Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation](https://tinyurl.com/5xac6t7a) (Ages 9-13) – tinyurl.com/5xac6t7a

The Trevor Project – [LGBTQ+ Resources](https://thetrevorproject.org/resources/) (Ages 13+) – thetrevorproject.org/resources/

Disability-inclusive Resources

Organization for Autism Research – [Sex Education Resource for Teens on the Autism Spectrum](https://tinyurl.com/2naymrms) (Ages 15+) – tinyurl.com/2naymrms

Your Sexual Health Toolkit – [Interactive Website for Youth with Disabilities](https://yoursexualhealthtoolkit.org) (Ages 16-24) – yoursexualhealthtoolkit.org

Youth-Friendly Sexual Health Services

Community-Based Sex Education

Here are options for youth and parents/caregivers to take sex education classes in local community settings:

Growing Up Classes

- Located at the Parenting Center (210 State St)
- Class times vary (typically held on weekday evenings & weekends)
- Offered for youth ages 9-15 and parents/caregivers
- Click [here](#) for upcoming offerings and RSVP

Hotlines

Here are hotlines that provide resources, crisis assistance, and/or emergency support for youth.

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

- Call or text 988
- Available 24/7
- Mental health crisis support

Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (STAR)

- Call 855.435.STAR
- Available 24/7
- Support for survivors of sexual trauma

Love is Respect

- Text “LOVEIS” to 22522, or call 1-866.331.9474
- Resources on preventing and ending abusive relationships

Trevor Project

- Call or text 866.488.7386
- Available 24/7
- Mental health and crisis counseling for LGBTQ+ youth

New Orleans Mobile Crisis Intervention Unit

- Call 911
- Available 24/7
- Mental health specialists deployed alongside emergency 911 services to respond to behavioral health crises

Youth-Friendly Sexual Health Services

Community-Based Health Care

Here are local, youth-friendly community clinics in New Orleans that provide sexual health services. STI/HIV testing is often quick and free, and youth ages 13+ can get tested at these locations without an accompanying guardian.

CrescentCare

- St. Roch Location: 1631 Elysian Fields Ave
 - Hours: Mon-Tues, Thurs-Fri 8:30 AM-5 PM; Wed 8:30 AM-6 PM
 - Phone: 504.821.2601
- Mid-City Location: 2515 Canal St
 - Hours: Mon & Thurs 8:30 AM-5 PM; Tues & Wed 8:30 AM-6 PM; Fri 8:30 AM-4 PM
 - Phone: 504.821.2601
- Website: crescentcare.org
- Services: STI/HIV testing and treatment, primary care, gender care, family planning, dental care, mental health services
- Walk-in services available
- Medicaid accepted, free services & sliding scale available

Tulane Total Health Clinic @ Ruth Fertel Tulane Community Health Center

- Located in Mid-City: 711 N Broad St
- Hours: Mon-Fri 8 AM-5 PM
- Phone: 504.988.3002
- Website: tulanetotalhealth.com
- Services: STI/HIV testing and treatment, family planning, contraception, Hepatitis C testing and treatment, vaccines
- Walk-in services available
- Medicaid accepted, free services & sliding scale available

Brotherhood Inc.

- Located in Mid-City: 2714 Canal St, Suite 304
- Hours: Mon-Thurs 9 AM-5PM; Fri 9 AM-1 PM
- Phone: 504.566.7955
- Website: brotherhoodinc.org
- Services: STI/HIV & hepatitis C testing and linkage to treatment
- Walk-in services available
- Services are free

Youth-Friendly Sexual Health Services

Community-Based Health Care

Here are local, youth-friendly community clinics in New Orleans that provide sexual health services. STI/HIV testing is often quick and free, and youth ages 13+ can get tested at these locations without an accompanying guardian.

EXCELth

- New Orleans East Location: 9900 Lake Forest Blvd, Suite F
 - Hours: Mon-Fri 8 AM-5 PM
 - Phone: 504.620.0500
- Algiers Location: 4422 General Meyer Ave, Suite 103
 - Hours: Mon-Fri 8 AM-5 PM
 - Phone: 504.526.1179
- Website: excelth.com
- Services: STI/HIV testing and treatment, primary care, behavioral health care, vaccines, dental care, nutritional counseling
- Walk-in services available
- Medicaid accepted, low-cost services & sliding scale available

NOELA Community Health Center

- Located in New Orleans East: 13085 Chef Mentour Hwy
- Hours: Mon-Fri 8 AM-5 PM; Sat 8 AM-12 PM
- Phone: 504.255.8665
- Website: noelachc.org
- Services: STI/HIV testing and treatment, primary care, behavioral health care, OB/GYN services
- Schedule an appointment online
- Medicaid accepted, low-cost services & sliding scale available



Scan QR code to find more **primary and sexual/reproductive health care providers.**



Scan QR code to find more **STI testing locations** in New Orleans

Call or text Bounce to Zero at 504.884.3307 for support **finding nearby HIV testing and treatment!**

Youth-Friendly Sexual Health Services

Here are some health care providers and clinics that offer youth-friendly services for gender-non conforming adolescents in New Orleans.ⁱ

Jennifer Garrett, MD

- 1315 Antoine St
- 504.891.4015

CrescentCare

- Locations in St. Roch and Mid-City
- 504.821.2601

Mitchell Handrich, FNP

- 2001 Canal St
- 504.756.9511

Kelly Baquet, DNP, APRN, FNP-C

- 1534 Aline St (The Clinic NOLA)
- 504.399.0364

Click here to find out more information about resources for LGBTQ+ youth in Louisiana.

<https://www.latransadvocates.org/>



ⁱNot all providers listed may accept patients below the age of 18. Call providers to confirm.

Updating Sexual Health Services

If you are a local sexual health care provider and would like to request an update to the information listed in this guide or add additional resources, please email ryann.martinek@nola.gov.

Conclusion

Open conversations at home and reliable educational resources are fundamental to supporting young people's sexual health. Parents and caregivers help youth understand their bodies, build healthy relationships, and make informed decisions. This guide offers information that parents and youth can learn together and trusted resources to navigate conversations about sexual and reproductive health.

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