

Resource:

# Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Saskatchewan



## Who We Are

Saskatoon Sexual Health's vision is a society where sexual and reproductive health and rights are celebrated and accessible to all. For over 40 years, we have provided sexual and reproductive health services in Saskatoon and area with an emphasis on safe, inclusive, empowering clinical care and education. We work with diverse communities to promote healthy and informed sexualities.

## Sexual Health in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan currently faces very poor outcomes directly related to sexual health:

- Highest rate of HIV infection in Canada
- Highest rate of Hepatitis C in Canada
- Highest provincial rate of chlamydia infection
- 393% increase in the rate of syphilis infection in 2018
- Highest provincial rate of adolescent pregnancy
- Second highest provincial rate of sexual violence



Saskatoon Sexual Health feels the weight of these outcomes on a daily basis. SSH's sexual health clinic serves clients with complex needs, including recurrent STBBI diagnoses, unintentional pregnancies, and ongoing trauma related to sexual violence. These alarming rates also fail to capture the fear, isolation, and confusion that each individual struggles with in seeking support services. Nor do these immediate challenges begin to consider the long-term impacts of HIV, untreated STBBIs, or sexual violence on not only the individual, but also the overall health of the community.

## The State of Sexual Health Education in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, the health curriculum has not been updated since 2009. In the decade since its release, the world young people live in has changed drastically. The increasing popularity of social media and the availability of online pornography has created a challenging landscape for parents, educators, and more importantly, young people themselves to navigate.

In classrooms across the province, students are asking questions like: "Is emotional abuse important if it's not paired with physical abuse?" and "If your partner is pressuring you to do something, how do you say no?" They want to know how to mitigate potential risks, nourish meaningful relationships, and how to respect themselves and others. The current curriculum fails to address critical topics such as consent and contraceptives, and it does not broach crucial conversations around faith, disability, or substance use. In 2018, the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN) released the updated Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education. A quick comparison of these guidelines and the current health education curriculum emphasizes these glaring omissions, and the curriculum's significant shortfalls.

### **What We Can Do**

The adverse health and sexual violence outcomes faced by residents of Saskatchewan are not problems that will be solved with stop-gap measures. It will take a coordinated effort between health, education, and the community sector to address these complex issues.

Overwhelming evidence has shown that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is the upstream, preventative solution to these problems. CSE refers to age-appropriate education about human rights, human sexuality, relationships, and sexual and reproductive health. It achieves these solutions through the provision of scientifically-accurate and non-judgmental information. It fosters the development of decision-making, critical thinking, and communication skills in adolescents. CSE offers the information young people need to make decisions about their bodies and health, and develop the skills necessary to nurture healthy relationships.

Saskatoon Sexual Health remains committed to providing clinical services and education programs to ensure safe and healthy communities across the province. Our organization has unique expertise in these areas, and a genuine desire to see forward thinking solutions. We are committed to a collaborative approach in order to see future generations flourish and thrive.

### **Our Education Program**

We are pleased to offer high quality, engaging, and informative educational opportunities. Our education programs promote informed decision making and ensure that information and support regarding sexual and reproductive health are available and accessible. We provide educational workshops, classroom presentations, professional development, and other educational resources. We carry a large selection of pamphlets on topics related to sexual and reproductive health, as well as information on partnering community organizations. We also have a lending library that includes books on a wide range of topics, from activism to pregnancy, and everything in between. We also offer birth control teaching kits, which are available to borrow. Please contact the office for information on any of these resources.