



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

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Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action

Youth, parents and health experts come together to address youth sexual health holistically

DENVER – The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has launched ***Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action***, Colorado’s effort to address youth sexual health as a holistic issue in young people’s lives beyond preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

The need for action is clear. While Colorado birth rates have declined over the past decade and more youth are using contraception when they do have sex —condom use is inconsistent, sexual violence among youth is on the rise, and rates of Chlamydia are increasing. The ***Call to Action*** provides strategies at the policy level, community level and family/peer level to improve the sexual health of individuals:

- Reducing rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- Reducing rates of unintended teen pregnancy;
- Decreasing the incidence of sexual assault and dating violence
- Increasing participation by youth in educational and career opportunities

The ***Call to Action*** recommends partnering with young people to develop, implement and evaluate community actions and strategies. Research demonstrates the value of this kind of collaboration to young people, adults and community organizations.

On Saturday, Oct. 27, young people, parents, community members, health experts and policy makers are invited to gather in Denver to launch the comprehensive statewide effort to address youth sexual health and present the ***Call to Action***.

What: *Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action*

When: Saturday, Oct. 27, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Denver Museum of Nature and Science

Input for the **Call to Action** plan was gathered through urban and rural community conversations, youth and parent informal focus groups, youth interviews and a statewide community survey.

In youth focus groups, Colorado young people said they need more information about sexual health, whether at school or at home, including information on STIs, contraception, safe relationships, and how to deal with peer and partner pressure.

“I want to be open with my family about my sexuality. I don’t want to be afraid to ask questions, or worry that they’ll kick me out if I tell them the truth.”

–Youth Focus Group Participant

Adults and youth expressed a strong need for comprehensive sexual education in school. Youth stated they would like to feel more confident in themselves and set goals, but must have appropriate opportunities and role models in their lives to develop these personal attributes. Adults cited a need for two-way communication.

“We need to create that window of communication and be open or they won’t come. Our kids need to feel like they can talk to us.”

–Parent Participant

Community members shared how the cycle of poverty affects equitable access and availability of health resources. The *Call to Action* recommends communities pool resources to bring necessary health services and programs to their area and consider how to positively change multiple areas of youth's lives.

“In order for youth to make informed decisions about their sexual health, they must see a future that provides them opportunity and hope. In many cases, a lack of hope leads to ambivalence and a lack of goal setting, both key factors in unintended pregnancies and risky sexual behaviors.”

–Community Youth Health Advocate

Youth Sexual Health in Colorado: A Call to Action is available at www.co9to25.org/youth-sexual-health. For more information on the Youth Sexual Health Colorado launch, please visit www.colorado9to25.org or contact Mary Jane Cassalia at 303-692-2942 or maryjane.cassalia@state.co.us.