

The Status of HIV/AIDS Education in Canada's Public Education Sector

Adopted by the Canadian AIDS Society's Board of Directors, March, 2005.

Context

HIV/AIDS education in Canada's public education sector is hugely inconsistent. In some provinces and territories, HIV/AIDS education begins early in elementary school and includes information about HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination, while in others, HIV/AIDS is only first mentioned in grade 8 learning outcomes and includes limited information.

The Canadian AIDS Society adopted this position statement on the status of HIV/AIDS education in Canada's public education sector in March 2005. Please refer to the accompanying Background Paper for information that supports this position at <www.cdnaids.ca>.

Position Statement

The Canadian AIDS Society's Board of Directors:

- Believes in the need for more consistent, comprehensive and curriculum-based HIV/AIDS education in Canada's public education sector.
 - Believes that young people in Canada have the right to comprehensive HIV/AIDS education no matter which province or territory they live in.
 - Believes that strong political leadership and commitment on the part of education ministers is needed if consistent, comprehensive and curriculum-based HIV/AIDS education is to become a reality.
 - Believes that information on HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination must be included in all HIV/AIDS curriculum.
 - Believes that information on substance use and the relationship between substance use and HIV/AIDS must be included in HIV/AIDS curriculum Canada-wide.
 - Believes in the need for youth friendly and learner friendly approaches to HIV/AIDS education in the classroom so as to ensure young people are engaged in the learning process.
 - Recognizes the unique role of schools in providing young people with important information about HIV/AIDS and related issues. As the 2003 *Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* points out: "since schools are the only formal educational institution to have meaningful contact with nearly every young person, they are in a unique position to provide youth with the knowledge and skills they need to make and act upon decisions that promote sexual health throughout their lives" (Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education, 17).
 - Recognizes that education is a provincial and territorial responsibility and the need therefore, for better coordination between provinces and territories.
-

-
- Supports the inclusion of young people in the development of HIV/AIDS curriculum.
 - Supports youth peer to peer HIV/AIDS education programs in schools.
 - Calls for the inclusion of HIV/AIDS education in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's (CMEC) new Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium on School Health.
 - Calls for the creation of national standards and national learning outcomes regarding HIV/AIDS education. As stated as a policy recommendation in the 2003 *Canadian Youth, Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Study*, "an outline of knowledge, skills, and attributes that are the standard criteria for each grade level from kindergarten to Grade 12 could be created" relevant to HIV/AIDS education. "These standard criteria would guide curriculum and instruction as well as teacher pre-service education, in-service or professional development, and parent education".
 - Calls on the Public Health Agency of Canada to include action items associated with the creation of more consistent, comprehensive and curriculum-based HIV/AIDS education in Canada's public education sector in *Leading Together: an HIV/AIDS Action Plan for All Canada 2005-2010* to be released in spring 2005.
-