

Houston Area HIV Services Ryan White Planning Council

Office of Support

2223 West Loop South, Suite 240, Houston, Texas 77027

832 927-7926 telephone; 713 572-3740 fax

<http://rwpchouston.org>

MEMORANDUM

To: Steering Committee Members:
Crystal R. Starr, Chair
Skeet Boyle, Vice Chair
Kevin Aloysius, Secretary
Rodney Mills, Co-Chair, Affected Community Committee
Tony Crawford, Co-Chair, Affected Community Committee
Josh Mica, Co-Chair, Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee
Steven Vargas, Co-Chair, Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee
Ronnie Galley, Co-Chair, Operations Committee
Matilda Padilla, Co-Chair, Operations Committee
Bobby Cruz, Co-Chair, Priority and Allocations Committee
Peta-gay Ledbetter, Co-Chair, Priority and Allocations Committee
Denis Kelly, Co-Chair, Quality Improvement Committee
Daphne L. Jones, Co-Chair, Quality Improvement Committee

Copy: Carin Martin
Heather Keizman
Mauricia Chatman
Yvette Garvin
Sha'Terra Johnson-Fairley

Mackenzie A. Hudson
Diane Beck
Ann Robison
David Williams (email only)

From: Tori Williams

Date: Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Re: Meeting Announcement

We look forward to seeing you at the:

Ryan White Steering Committee Meeting

12 noon, Thursday, September 1, 2022

Join the Zoom meeting by clicking on:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85782189192?pwd=YmtrckTWcHY5SIV2RE50ZzYraEErQT09>

Meeting ID: 857 8218 9192 Passcode: 885832

Or, use your phone to dial in by calling 346 248-7799

Please contact Rod to RSVP, even if you cannot attend, and let her know if you prefer to meet at the Office of Support. There is room for up to 5 people who are socially distancing in our conference room. Rod can be reached by telephone at: 832 927-7926 or by email at: Rodriga.Avila@cjo.hctx.net. Thank you!

HOUSTON AREA HIV SERVICES RYAN WHITE PLANNING COUNCIL



STEERING COMMITTEE

AGENDA

12 noon, Thursday, September 1, 2022

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking onto the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85782189192?pwd=YmtrcktWcHY5SIV2RE50ZzYraEErQT09>

Meeting ID: 857 8218 9192 Passcode: 885832

Or, dial in by calling 346 248-7799

- I. Call to Order Crystal R. Starr, Chair
RW Planning Council
- A. Welcoming Remarks
 - B. Moment of Reflection
 - C. Select the Committee Co-Chair who will be voting today
 - D. Adoption of the Agenda
 - E. Adoption of the Minutes

II. Public Comment and Announcements

(NOTE: If you wish to speak during the Public Comment portion of the meeting, please sign up on the clipboard at the front of the room. No one is required to give his or her name or HIV status. All meetings are audio taped by the Office of Support for use in creating the meeting minutes. The audiotape and the minutes are public record. If you state your name or HIV status it will be on public record. If you would like your health status known, but do not wish to state your name, you can simply say: "I am a person living with HIV", before stating your opinion. If you represent an organization, please state that you are representing an agency and give the name of the organization. If you work for an organization, but are representing yourself, please state that you are attending as an individual and not as an agency representative. Individuals can also submit written comments to a member of the staff who would be happy to read the comments on behalf of the individual at this point in the meeting. All information from the public must be provided in this portion of the meeting.)

III. Reports from Committees

- A. Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee Steven Vargas and
Josh Mica, Co-Chairs
- Item:* 2022 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Services Plan
Recommended Action: FYI: Verbal update on the first Community Education Meeting that was held on Monday, August 29th.

All are encouraged to sign up for one of the remaining Community Education Meetings that will be held virtually from 4 – 6 pm this evening, Thursday, September 1 and Monday, September 6. Then sign up to participate in one or all three planning meetings where we will take what we learn in the Community Education Meetings and create the strategies and action steps for our 2022 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Services Plan.

- B. Affected Community Committee Tony Crawford and
Rodney Mills, Co-Chairs
- There was no meeting in August so that Committee members can attend one of the Community Education meetings and one or more Community Planning

meetings described earlier. Over 250 people have been interviewed or participated in focus groups to tell the Planning Council and CPG what they believe will strengthen HIV Prevention and Care services and end the HIV epidemic. Please attend the meetings and hear what these individuals are telling us.

C. Operations Committee

Item: Letter of Agreement Among RW Part B Stakeholders
Recommended Action: FYI: The Operations Committee has reviewed the attached Letter of Agreement among RW Part B Stakeholders. Please review the attached draft document so that it can be voted on at the October or November 2022 Steering and Council meeting.

Ronnie Galley and
Matilda Padilla, Co-Chairs

Item: 2022 Proyecto VIDA

Recommended Action: FYI: Verbal updates on Proyecto VIDA.

Steven Vargas, Co-Facilitator
Proyecto VIDA

D. Quality Improvement Committee

**TENTATIVE MOTION THAT WILL BE WITHDRAWN
IF THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE IS
UNABLE TO MEET AT THE END OF AUGUST**

Item: Assessment of the Administrative Mechanism – Part A

Recommended Action: **Motion:** Approve the attached 2022 Assessment of the Administrative Mechanism for Ryan White Part A. No corrective action required.

Denis Kelly and
Daphne Jones, Co-Chairs

E. Priority and Allocations Committee

No report since the Committee does not meet in August or September.

Peta-gay Ledbetter and
Bobby Cruz, Co-Chairs

IV. Report from the Office of Support

Tori Williams, Director

V. Report from Ryan White Grant Administration

Carin Martin, Manager

VI. Report from The Resource Group

Sha'Terra Johnson,
Health Planner

VII. Announcements

The students of 2022 Proyecto VIDA will be attending the September Council to observe the meeting, meet the members and give public comment as part of their class project.

VIII. Adjournment

* MAI = Minority AIDS Initiative Funding

** SS = State Services Funding

HOUSTON AREA HIV SERVICES RYAN WHITE PLANNING COUNCIL
 <<◇>>
 STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

12 noon, Thursday, August 4, 2022
 Meeting Location: Zoom teleconference

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	STAFF PRESENT
Crystal Starr, Chair	Tony Crawford, excused	<i>Ryan White Grant Administration</i>
Skeet Boyle, Vice Chair	Matilda Padilla	Carin Martin
Kevin Aloysius, Secretary		Mauricia Chatman
Rodney Mills		Sarah Ross
Josh Mica		
Steven Vargas		<i>The Resource Group</i>
Ronnie Galley		Sha'Terra Johnson
Bobby Cruz		
Peta-gay Ledbetter		<i>Office of Support</i>
Daphne L. Jones		Tori Williams
Denis Kelly		Mackenzie Hudson
		Diane Beck

Call to Order: Crystal Starr, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

During the opening remarks, Starr thanked those who have been attending the Council meetings in person. According to the Open Meetings Act, we must have at least 11 in-person participants or we don't make quorum. Lunch will be provided to those who attend in person. Starr continued by stating that she hopes folks have been attending the Monkey Pox Townhall meetings. Dr. Ericka Brown and her team at the Harris County Health Department have been working to provide important information and ask for input on ways to reach the LGBTQ community since Men Who Have Sex with Men are especially vulnerable to this very painful disease. Starr then called for a Moment of Reflection.

The Chair invited committee co-chairs to select the co-chair who would be voting on behalf of their committee. Those selected to vote for their committee at today's meeting are: Mills for Affected Community, Vargas for Comprehensive HIV Planning, Galley for Operations, Ledbetter for Priority and Allocations and Kelly for Quality Improvement.

Adoption of the Agenda: *Motion #1:* it was moved and seconded (Galley, Mica) to adopt the agenda. **Motion carried.** Abstention: Mills.

Approval of the Minutes: *Motion #2:* it was moved and seconded (Galley, Mica) to approve the July 7, 2022 minutes. **Motion carried.** Abstentions: Jones, Ledbetter, Mills.

Public Comment and Announcements: None.

Reports from Committees

Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee: Josh Mica, Co-Chair, reported on the following:

2022 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Services Plan: Members of the Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee attended a “dress rehearsal” for an educational community meeting. Only a small portion of the information gathered for the Integrated Plan was presented. There will be much more information presented at several community meetings. Hence, it will be important for all Council members to attend at least one of the upcoming educational community meetings; time and dates to be announced soon.

Affected Community Committees: Ronnie Galley, reported on the following:

2022-23 Committee Project: **Motion #3:** *The Affected Community Committee will be committing time in 2022 – 2023 to working with subject experts and community partners to design HIV education and care services for Youth, a Houston area priority population.* **Motion Carried.** Williams clarified that Youth is ages 18-24 but can be younger with parental consent.

Operations Committee: Ronnie Galley, Co-Chair, reported on the following:

Ryan White Youth Council: **Motion #4:** *The Operations Committee will be dedicating 2022 – 2023 to working collaboratively with the Affected Community Committee to develop a Ryan White Youth Council.* **Motion Carried.** Vargas said he will send the Office of Support an NPR report on sex education for youth to distribute to the Affected Community and Operations Committees and the LEAP students.

2022 Proyecto VIDA: Steven Vargas, Proyecto VIDA Co-Facilitator said that they just had their ninth class so we are at the halfway mark. The County Judge’s legal counsel, Kathryn Kase, presented; she was well received and the students were very interactive with her. Vargas continued by saying that he gave a presentation on Advocacy and Gloria Sierra talked to the students about issues related to HIV and aging.

Quality Improvement Committee: No meeting in July, hence no report.

Priority and Allocations Committee: Bobby Cruz, Co-Chair, reported on the following:

Reports from the Administrative Agent – Part A/MAI*:

- FY21 Part A & MAI Procurement, dated 06/01/22
- FY22 Part A & MAI Procurement, dated 06/02/22

Reports from the Administrative Agent – Part B/SS**:

- FY 21/22 Part B Procurement, dated 07/07/22
- FY 21/22 DSHS SS** Procurement, dated 007/07/22
- FY 21/22 DSHS SS** Service Utilization, dated 07/07/22
- FY 21/22 Health Insurance Service Utilization, dated 07/01/22

FY2021 MAI* Carryover Funds: **Motion #5:** *Wait until the Fall 2022 Priority and Allocations Committee meeting to decide on the \$273,335 in MAI funds.* **Motion Carried.** Abstentions: Aloysius, Kelly.

FY 2021 Ryan White Part A Carryover Funds: **Motion #6:** *Calculate the full amount of request Control Numbers: 1 - 3, then deduct one third of the shortfall from each request to indicate the recommended amount. See the attached chart for details.* **Motion Carried.** Abstentions: Aloysius, Kelly.

* MAI = Minority AIDS Initiative Funding

** SS = State Services Funding

Report from Ryan White Office of Support: Tori Williams, Director, summarized the attached report.

Report from Ryan White Grant Administration: Carin Martin, Manager, summarized the attached report.

Report from The Resource Group: Sha'Terra Johnson, Health Planner, summarized the attached report.

Announcements: Harris County Public Health will host the 2nd Monkey Pox Community Town Hall meeting this Friday, August 5th. The meetings are tailored to an audience that may be at risk. Registration is required for those that plan to attend online. Register: <https://bit.ly/monkeypoxhceph2> or join by phone: 346 248 7799. Meeting ID: 984 7486 0148, Passcode: 4274.

Adjournment: Motion: *it was moved and seconded (Galley, Vargas) to adjourn the meeting at 1:03 p.m. Motion Carried.*

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Tori Williams, Director Date

Committee Chair Date

2022 Steering Committee Voting Record for Meeting Date 08/04/22

C = Chaired the meeting, ja = Just arrived, lm = Left the meeting
 Aff-Affected Community Committee, Comp-Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee, Op-Operations Committee,
 PA-Priority and Allocations Committee, QI-Quality Improvement Committee

MEMBERS	Motion #1 Agenda Carried				Motion #2 Minutes Carried				Motion #3 2022-23 Committee Project Carried				Motion #4 Ryan White Youth Council Carried				Motion #5 FY21 MAI Carryover funds Carried				Motion #6 FY21 Part A Carryover funds Carried			
	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Crystal Starr, Chair				C				C				C				C				C				C
Skeet Boyle, Vice Chair		X				X				X				X				X				X		
Kevin Aloysius, Secretary		X				X				X				X						X				X
Rodney Mills, Aff		X				X				X				X				X				X		
Steven Vargas, Comp		X				X				X				X				X				X		
Ronnie Galley, Op		X				X				X				X				X				X		
Peta-gay Ledbetter, PA		X				X				X				X				X				X		
Denis Kelly, QI		X				X				X				X						X				X
<i>Non-voting members at the meeting:</i>																								
Josh Mica, Comp																								
Bobby Cruz, PA																								
Daphne L. Jones, QI																								
<i>Absent members:</i>																								
Tony Crawford, Aff																								
Matilda Padilla, Op																								

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Houston Area HIV Services Ryan White Planning Council
2223 West Loop South, Suite 240, Houston, Texas 77027
713 572-3724 telephone; 713 572-3740 fax
<http://rwpchouston.org>

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Parties to the Letter of Agreement:

1. Harris County Judge – The “Chief Elected Official” (CEO)
2. Houston Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) Ryan White Part A Planning Council – The “Planning Council” (RWPC)
3. Houston EMA Office of Support for the Ryan White Part A Planning Council
4. Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) - Part B Grantee
5. Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group, Inc. - Houston HIV Service Delivery Area (HSDA) Part B Administrative Agency
6. Harris County Public Health, Ryan White Grant Administration Section (HCPH/RWGA) - Houston EMA Part A Administrative Agency

PURPOSE

This Letter of Agreement is created to facilitate cooperative and collaborative working relationships between and among the Ryan White Part B Administrative Agency (AA) and the Ryan White Part A Planning Council. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a division of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, encourages stakeholders to document via a Letter of Agreement (LOA) to better define responsibilities for the Houston Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA) and the Houston Health Services Delivery Area (HSDA) designated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS). The Houston EMA is designated by HRSA to receive Ryan White Program Part A funds to provide services to People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A). The Houston EMA is a six-county area in southeast Texas that consists of Chambers, Fort Bend, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller counties. The Houston HSDA consists of these same six counties and four others – Austin, Colorado, Walker and Wharton.

This document is not intended to restate all HRSA and TDSHS rules, but rather to clarify entity roles and outline procedures that will foster productive interaction and efficient communication between and among the six stakeholders.

This LOA is a dynamic tool to help the principal stakeholders avert conflict and foster collaborative relationships and decision-making processes. The underlying foundation of the agreement is the principle of mutual respect. Mutual respect is created through open communication, active listening, seeking understanding, and acknowledging our mutual goals. This document is built upon the understanding that the six entities, parties to the LOA, are equal stakeholders in the Ryan White process with the shared goal of helping individuals and families living with HIV/AIDS obtain the highest quality and most appropriate Ryan White Program eligible services.

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HRSA DEFINED ROLES AND DUTIES

The following is taken from the 2002 HRSA Title I (Part A) manual and the Title I (Part A) Planning Council Primer and describes the role and duties of the:

Chief Elected Official (CEO):

The CEO is the person who officially receives the Part A Ryan White Program funds, also referred to as the Grantee for Part A. In the Houston EMA, the CEO is the County Judge., The County Judge is ultimately responsible for administering all aspects of the Part A funds. Duties include: ensuring that all legal requirements are met; appointing all members of the Planning Council; and selecting the HCPH to be the AA (or recipient) for the Part A funding.

Houston Ryan White Part A Planning Council (Planning Council)

This entity is a group of volunteers appointed by the CEO whose purpose is to plan for and oversee the delivery of services to persons with HIV in the defined EMA/HSDA. Duties include: setting up planning body operations; setting priorities; allocating resources to those priorities; assessing the administrative mechanism which means reviewing how long the grantee takes to pay providers, reviewing whether the funds are used to pay only for services that were identified as priorities by the planning council; and whether all the funds are spent. The Council also works with the AAs to assess need, develop a comprehensive plan, coordinate with other Ryan White programs and services, and reallocate funds as necessary. The Planning Council reports to the CEO.

Planning Council Office of Support:

This entity provides administrative support to the Council. Duties include, but not limited to: coordinating and staffing all Council processes; interfacing with HRSA, the CEO's Office and other County Offices regarding Council business; and assisting Council members stay in compliance with federal and county rules and regulations, as well as Council bylaws, policies and procedures. The Manager of the Office of Support reports to the Planning Council and the CEO.

Ryan White Part A Administrative Agency (CEO's Agent, also called the Part A recipient):

This entity carries out the day-to-day administrative activities required to implement and administer services in the defined EMA according to the plan set forth by the Planning Council. Duties include: procuring services for PLWH/A consistent with Planning Council priorities and allocations, including all aspects of the Request for Proposals (RFP), review, award and contracting process with service providers; establishing intergovernmental agreements; ensuring services to women, infants, children, and youth with HIV/AIDS; ensuring that Ryan White Program Part A funds address funding gaps; ensuring delivery of quality services; preparing and submitting Part A applications; assuring all services are in compliance with HRSA rules and regulations; limiting recipient administrative costs; limiting contractor administrative costs; monitoring contracts; advising the Council on HRSA mandates; and working with the Council to assess need, develop a comprehensive plan, coordinate with other Ryan White Program recipients and service providers programs, and reallocate funds.

Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS)

This entity is the Ryan White Program Part B and State Services (SS) Recipient for the state of Texas. The Part B recipient is the entity that officially receives the Part B funds. Locally,

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TDSHS is ultimately responsible for administering all aspects of Part B and SS funds. Duties include: ensuring that all legal requirements are met; selecting and contracting with Part B/SS AAs; and providing oversight, monitoring and technical assistance to AAs in the planning and implementation of Part B/SS funds.

Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group, Inc.

This entity is contracted by TDSHS to carry out the day-to-day administrative activities required to implement and administer services in the Part B and SS HIV/AIDS Administrative Service Area (HASA) according to the comprehensive plan. Duties include: procuring services for PLWH/A consistent with the local priorities and allocation as approved by TDSHS; including all aspects of the RFP, review, award and contracting process with service providers; establishing intergovernmental agreements; ensuring services to women, infants, children, and youth living with HIV/AIDS; **(ADD): ensuring service deliver to rural residents living with HIV/AIDS residing in the HSDA**; ensuring that Ryan White Program funds are used to address gaps; ensuring delivery of quality services; preparing and submitting Part B applications to the State; assuring all services are in compliance with HRSA rules and regulations; limiting recipient administrative costs; limiting contractor administrative costs; monitoring contracts; and assessing need, developing a comprehensive plan, coordinating with other Ryan White Program recipients and services; and reallocating funds.

DEFINED RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HOUSTON EMA/HSDA

In areas where there is shared responsibility between the Part A Planning Council, Part A & B/SS AAs, and the Office of Support, it is agreed that, in the Houston EMA/HSDA, the entities named above will have primary responsibility for initiating and completing the following:

Houston Ryan White Planning Council and Part A and B/SS Administrative Agents agree to:

- Collaborate in developing the Part A and B/SS Standards of Care;
- Collaborate in determining the Part A/Part B/SS Outcome Measures; and
- The Part B/SS AA, TDSHS, and Part A AA will develop procedures to ensure that Part A, Part B & State Services client level data is entered into the ARIES system whether through direct input or import.

Houston Ryan White Planning Council and Part B/SS Administrative Agency (The Resource Group) agree to:

- Collaborate to provide guidance and leadership in the development and implementation of a timeline for all required Part B/SS AA and Council work products that is consistent with published deadlines;
- Collaborate on planning and completion of multi-year and/or recurring processes, such as needs assessment and comprehensive planning in order that the Council is appropriately informed of its deadlines and expected work products;
- Collaborate on a Needs Assessment process to determine the size and demographics of the population of individuals living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in the Houston EMA/HSDA, and through this process jointly determine the needs of such populations in the defined geographic area;
- Collaborate on the production of, and updates to, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for the defined EMA/HSDA; and
- The Part B/SS AA and the Planning Council will collaborate to develop a single list of service priorities for the Houston HSDA.

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Houston Ryan White Planning Council agrees to:

- Indicate to the Part A and Part B/SS AAs, through the service definitions and the standards of care, how the services are to be configured;
- Develop recommendations for Part B and State Services allocations for the EMA/HSDA; (Recommended priorities and allocations and reallocations for the EMA/HSDA may not be changed by the Part B/SS Administrative Agency and must be presented to TDSHS for approval.)
- Develop recommendations for the reallocation of Part B and SS funds;
- Assess the Part B/SS AA administrative mechanism, which could include reviewing how long the AA takes to pay providers, reviewing whether the funds are used to pay only for services that were identified as priorities by the planning council and whether all the funds are spent. (Per the County Judge’s Office: Distribute copies of the final assessment to DSHS, the Part B/SS AA and the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Houston AA for RW Part B and State Services.) This will be done annually in January; and
- Solicit input from the Part B/SS AA in the development of the Houston EMA/HSDA HIV/AIDS Resource Guide, commonly known as The Blue Book.

Part B/State Services Administrative Agency agrees to:

- Provide accurate, timely, aggregate service category and other information needed or requested for the different Council processes such as the *How to Best Meet the Need*, priority setting, annual allocations, reallocations and other processes;
- Coordinate and staff the Part B/SS Standard of Care and Outcome Measures Work Groups to ensure appropriate interface with the Quality Management Program and because Standards of Care must also reflect all HRSA Ryan White and TDSHS programmatic and fiscal guidelines and more;
- Within thirty-days of receiving a notice of grant award for Part B or State Services funding, inform the Office of Support in writing of the award amount and date of notice;
- Inform the Office of Support after the initial grant awards are distributed and within 45-days after the end of the second quarter of any unobligated funds available for reallocation;
- Notify all Part B/SS agencies when the Planning Council’s Priority and Allocations Committee is preparing to allocate or reallocate funds;
- Within 30-days of announcing the availability of funds, provide the Council with de-identified service category funding requests increase so that the Council can review and make recommendations for reallocating these funds;
- Inform the Office of Support within thirty-days of any allocation changes made under the Houston RWPC-approved “10% rule”. The 10% rule allows the AA to shift funds between Service Categories without prior Council recommendation as long as funds shift no more than 10% of the current approved TDSHS allocation for either service category affected by the change;
- In the final quarter of the Ryan White Part B and SS grant years, after implementing the year end Planning Council-approved reallocation of unspent funds and utilizing the existing 10% reallocation rule to the extent feasible, the Part B/SS AA may reallocate any remaining unspent funds as necessary to ensure no funds are returned to the TDSHS. If funds are to be moved from the Houston HSDA, the Part B/SS AA will notify the Office of Support when the information is submitted to the TDSHS. The Office of Support will

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notify the members of the Priority and Allocations Committee upon receipt and the Steering Committee and Council at their next scheduled meetings; and

- Annually in November of each year, contact the principal Stakeholders, listed at the beginning of this document, to determine if any wish to review and/or revise the LOA. This annual process will provide an opportunity for Stakeholders to ensure the LOA will continue to be responsive to the needs and responsibilities of all concerned.

Distributing Information to the Council, its Committees and Work Groups

Information will be delivered to the Office of Support for distribution to the Council, its Committees and workgroups. The Office of Support will determine the appropriate process to be used to disseminate the information. When providing information, please keep the following in mind:

- 1.) Requests requiring Council or committee approval must be submitted in writing eight-days prior to the date of the meeting;
- 2.) When information does not require approval, submission of the information eight-days before the date of the meeting is preferred; and
- 3.) Once a workgroup or committee has created a recommendation in response to the request, the chair of the Committee, workgroup or designee will be responsible for moving the request forward and speaking on behalf of the request.

Signed By:

Harris County Judge

Date

Chair, Houston Ryan White Planning Council

Date

Office of Support for the Houston Ryan White Planning Council

Date

TDSHS, Texas Part B and State Services Grantee

Date

Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group, Inc.

Date

Harris County Public Health, RWGA Section

Date



EDUCATION

What does age-appropriate, comprehensive sex ed actually look like?

July 30, 2022 · 9:16 AM ET

Heard on Weekend Edition Saturday

LEE GAINES ELIZABETH MILLER

7-Minute Listen

PLAYLIST Download
Transcript

With abortion access changing in many states, advocates for sex education say it's more important than ever.

Lee Gaines is from member station WFYI, and Elizabeth Miller is from member station OPB.

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

Advocates for comprehensive sex education say it's more important than ever now that Roe v. Wade has been overturned. But like so many things related to education, sex ed is highly politicized. Only three states require schools to teach age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education. In other states, it's up to the schools to decide. Last spring, we sent reporters into an elementary school and a high school to get a sense of how those lessons are taught. Lee Gaines from member station WFYI starts us off in Indianapolis.

HAILEIGH HUGGINS: As I talk about these body systems, I'm going to use, like, the scientific words for these body parts. And I am going to be talking about the private

parts, OK?

LEE GAINES, BYLINE: Haileigh Huggins is leading a sex ed class for fifth graders at Louis B. Russell Jr. Elementary School. Some students fidget. Some giggle. And a lot of them have questions - like, can boys have babies?

HUGGINS: No, they cannot get pregnant. Yes?

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT #1: But even if they're, like - if they like boys?

HUGGINS: So if it's, like, two people of the same gender in a relationship...

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT #2: Yeah.

HUGGINS: ...Then they still would not be able to have a pregnancy because they both would have sperm cells, right? There wouldn't be an egg cell.

GAINES: When you think of sex ed, you often think about lessons on puberty and reproduction. But comprehensive sex ed goes beyond that. It teaches students about healthy relationships, how to communicate consent, how to respect yourself and other people and how to identify dangerous situations.

NORA GELPERIN: Even though it may seem like sex education is controversial, it absolutely is not. And it's always in the best interest of young people.

GAINES: Nora Gelperin has designed sex ed curricula with the organization Advocates for Youth. She says these comprehensive sex ed lessons should start as early as kindergarten. And there are lots of ways to make them fun and age-appropriate. She loves using hula hoops to teach bodily autonomy.

GELPERIN: So if you give each student a hula hoop and then you use the hula hoop as an analogy for boundaries and talk about if someone is trying to come inside your hula hoop, that they should ask for your permission to tickle you, to hug you, to give you a kiss, all of those kinds of things. If someone is touching you inside your boundary in a way that makes you uncomfortable, it's OK to say no and talk to a trusted adult.

GAINES: Another good lesson for younger kids is how to identify those trusted adults and what healthy relationships with friends and family look like. When students reach fifth and sixth grade, Gelperin says the conversation should shift to puberty because that's something those students are starting to see and experience. It's also a good time to start talking about gender expression and stereotypes.

GELPERIN: And as it relates to gender - that may be that they're acting similar to other kids their gender, or they may be interested in things - hobbies, activities, sports - that aren't typically something associated with their gender, and all of it is fine and normal.

GAINES: Gelperin says normalizing the experiences of young people is a crucial component of comprehensive sex ed. And simple lessons, like the hula-hoop activity, set the foundation for more advanced conversations in middle and high school.

Eva Goldfarb researches sex ed at Montclair State University. She co-authored a study that found, if done well and introduced in early grades, comprehensive sex ed has a lot of benefits.

EVA GOLDFARB: Increase prevention of child sex abuse, increase prevention of dating and interpersonal violence, decrease homophobic bullying and harassment, promote healthy relationships, build life skills, such as empathy, respect for others.

GAINES: But few states require schools to teach comprehensive sex ed. That's according to SIECUS, a group that advocates for progressive sex education policies. Indiana is among the majority of states that don't require comprehensive sex ed. School leaders here can choose to invite educators, like Haileigh Huggins, into classrooms.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT #3: A boy gets pregnant.

HUGGINS: Well, they wouldn't...

GAINES: Still, Huggins doesn't get a lot of time with students - just one hour with each class. In the classroom I visited, kids were still asking her questions as she made her way out the door.

HUGGINS: I can't take the rest of your questions only because I have to, like, book it down the hall the sixth grade. So if you have other questions, I do encourage you - remember, talk to those trusted adults.

GAINES: For NPR News, I'm Lee Gaines at Louis B. Russell Jr. Elementary School in Indianapolis.

ELIZABETH MILLER, BYLINE: And I'm Elizabeth Miller at Mountainside High School in Beaverton, Ore., outside Portland.

(SOUNDBITE OF SCHOOL BELL TONE)

MILLER: Unlike Indiana, Oregon requires comprehensive sexual education from kindergarten through 12th grade. By the time students get to Jenn Hicks' high school health class, they've had years of conversation around consent and sexuality.

JENN HICKS: So that when they come to me as high schoolers, it's like, oh, yeah; we know this.

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT #4: Yeah. I mean, I don't know...

UNIDENTIFIED STUDENT #5: It was, like, mold...

MILLER: This classroom feels pretty different from the one in Indiana. These high school students are on their cell phones and taking notes on their laptops. And the conversations they're having are also different.

HICKS: Honestly, sexual violence can happen to anyone, but it doesn't happen equally to everyone.

MILLER: Back in elementary school, lessons on healthy relationships focused on family and friends. By high school, Nora Gelperin says the focus should shift to romantic partners.

GELPERIN: What makes a relationship healthy? How do you know if a relationship is not healthy? - starting to explore intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment in particular, to really help students know that they deserve

to be in a healthy relationship and that there are a lot of resources and strategies if that's not what they're experiencing.

MILLER: Gelperin says sex ed in high school should also include lessons on contraception and how to use a condom - ways to reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. She says, without that knowledge, students don't have all the tools they need.

GELPERIN: I always think about a student that I once worked with who said, you know, how can you adults expect us teenagers to make healthy decisions if you're too scared to teach us what we need to know?

MILLER: Less than half of states require instruction on contraception. And then there are the lessons that don't have anything to do with sex, like how to find credible sources of information. Think about all the rumors about sex that can circulate in a high school. Those rumors are also all over the internet. As a kid looking for information, it can be hard to know what to believe.

LISA LIEBERMAN: We're allowing children to learn from what's out there, and they are.

MILLER: Lisa Lieberman co-authored that sex ed study for Montclair State. She studies adolescent and preteen health.

LIEBERMAN: They are accessing pornography. They are accessing the internet. They are learning in ways that are not the messages that most parents and schools want children to have.

MILLER: Lieberman says it's important to teach students how to find accurate information so they don't believe all the misinformation. Talking about healthy relationships and having open conversations around contraception and consent - it's all meant to give students a foundation - because, like it or not, parents, your kid is going to encounter sex. And as we heard earlier, teaching them about sex and relationships can help keep them safe from abuse.

HICKS: We are going to talk about gender and sexuality.

MILLER: Mountainside High School teacher Jenn Hicks says it all comes down to building a safer, more inclusive school community.

HICKS: It's recognizing everybody that's in the room and giving them the knowledge and skills to make the best possible decisions for themselves and to lead a happy, fulfilled life.

MILLER: She hopes that's something parents and policymakers can get behind.

For NPR News, I'm Elizabeth Miller in Beaverton.

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