

THE TALK

(you know, THAT one...)

**A Guide to Comprehensive Sexual
Health Education in Illinois**



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About the zine:

The purpose of this zine is to provide information and tools to support sexual health and personal safety and to provide guidance on how to advocate for inclusive, comprehensive sex education in Illinois schools for young people in 6th through 12th grade.

This zine was created and designed by students with support from the ACLU of Illinois.

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THE KEEPING YOUTH SAFE AND HEALTHY ACT

Inclusive, affirming, and comprehensive personal health and safety and sexual health education gives young people the information and skills needed to be safe and support informed decisions about their health and well-being.

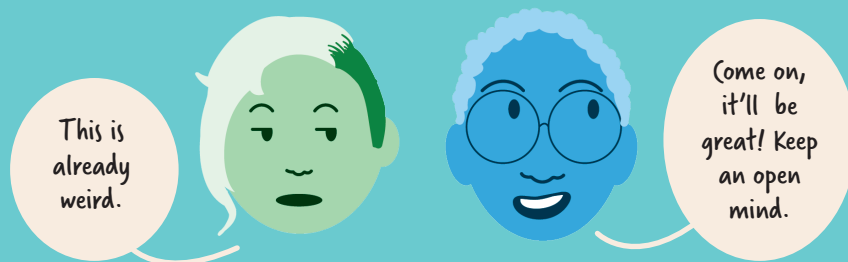
The Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act is a new law that creates personal health and safety standards for K - 5th grade and updates and expands comprehensive sexual health education standards in 6th - 12th grade. The standards must align with the National Sex Education Standards.

Throughout this zine, we will talk about different types of information covered in the National Sex Education Standards and share resources and information on comprehensive sexual health education for people in 6th through 12th grade. This information will help you make the best decisions about your health and relationships and advocate for inclusive, and comprehensive sexual health education in your school!

Here is an overview of the Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act to kick us off.

How the old and new law compare:	Old law:	Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act:
Includes anatomy and physiology	✗	✓
Discusses healthy relationships	✗	✓
Explores identity (sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity)	✗	✓
Sexual health education is culturally appropriate and trauma informed	✗	✓
Includes STIs, including HIV, and cites the effectiveness of prevention methods	✗	✓
Emphasizes full range of information and tools to prevent unintended pregnancies	✗	✓
Sexual health education in Illinois is inclusive of all youth	✗	✓

ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, ADOLESCENT GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



Puberty refers to the period of time when adolescents reach sexual maturity and most become capable of reproduction. For nearly everyone, puberty involves growth in height and hair growth in areas such as underarms, legs, and pubic areas. Don't worry! Body hair is normal. What you want to do with your hair is completely up to you. Puberty can cause acne induced by stress, diet, or a whole other list of factors. It is nothing to be embarrassed about. Some people work with a doctor or healthcare provider to help them go through puberty. Everyone develops and goes through puberty at different rates, and whichever rate you're growing at is perfect for you.

Sex assigned at birth or sex is separate from gender identity and gender expression. A person's sex assigned at birth is often based on the anatomy and external genitalia. People may be assigned female, male, or intersex at birth based on the reproductive and biological organs they have.

As a person grows, part of their brain, known as the hypothalamus, sends a message to the body and begins producing hormones which cause people with ovaries to begin producing more estrogen and people with testes to begin producing greater levels of testosterone. When these levels change, people may notice other changes in their body.

For most people with ovaries and/or a uterus, estrogen levels generally begin to increase around 10 years old. These individuals might experience:

- The start of menstruation (otherwise known as a period)
- Development of breast tissue
- Greater hip and thigh development

For most people with testes, increases in testosterone generally occurs around 11 years old. These individuals might experience:

- Muscles becoming larger
- Voice changes
- Lengthening of the penis

Intersex is an umbrella term for differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy. Intersex people are born with these differences or develop them in childhood. There are many possible differences in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy, or chromosomes, compared to the usual two ways that human bodies develop.



The intersex flag

Some intersex traits are noticed at birth. Others don't show up until puberty or later in life. Intersex people often face shame—or are forced or coerced into changing their bodies, usually at a very young age. Most surgeries to change intersex traits happen in infancy, but many are not medically necessary.

Did you know?

About 2% of the population is born with intersex traits - similar to the number of people born with red hair.

Gender Identity

Gender identity is different than the sex you are assigned at birth. It is your own personal sense of identity, including identifying as male, female, a blend of both, or neither.

Gender expression is how one expresses their gender identity, usually through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice. A person's gender expression may or may not conform to behaviors and styles typically associated with being either masculine or feminine in society. For example, some people choose to present as androgynous, meaning that they express themselves as masculine and feminine at the same time.

Transition refers to the process of bringing one's outward expression of gender more closely into alignment with one's gender identity. For some people, this might include social transition such as using names or pronouns, wearing clothing, or styling their hair in a way that is typically associated with their gender identity. Some people might medically transition, which could include hormone treatment, puberty blockers, or different surgeries. This can also include a legal transition where someone legally changes their name or gender marker on their identification to match their gender identity.

Here are some helpful gender identity terms to know:



Agender

Someone who doesn't identify with a specific gender or someone who lacks a connection to gender.



Nonbinary

A collection of gender identities that includes those who don't identify as exclusively men or women.



Transgender

A person whose gender identity and/or expression is not aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cisgender: someone whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Conforming: someone who doesn't express themselves based on masculine and feminine gender norms.

Queer: an umbrella term often used by people who do not conform to dominant societal norms to express fluid sexual orientation, gender identity, or sexual identity.

Remember: Gender identity is a spectrum and the only person that can define your gender identity is **you!**

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Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the emotional, sexual attraction, and possibly romantic attraction a person has towards another person.

Here are some terms/labels to know about sexual orientation:

Remember, labels can only be given to yourself by yourself. Someone may use one of these labels to identify themselves but not have the exact same definition as below. Also, someone's sexual behavior is not the same as their sexual orientation.



Gay: A person attracted to people of the same gender.



Lesbian: Women, as well as some non-binary people, attracted to other women.



Ace: An umbrella term to describe identities where someone doesn't experience sexual or romantic attraction, experiences attraction rarely, or only experiences it under limited situations. This includes people who are asexual and aromantic.



Demisexual: A person who is only sexually attracted to another person once they have an emotional bond.



Pansexual: A person who is attracted to the personality of another regardless of gender identity; attracted to all genders.



Bisexual: A person who is attracted to more than one gender.

Heterosexual: A person who is attracted to a different gender.

Romantic Attraction vs. Sexual Attraction

Romantic attraction is an emotional connection to another person, based on their personality, values, or intellect. Sexual attraction is based on sexual desires. Some people's romantic and sexual attractions are the same and some people's are not.

Coming Out

Coming out is defined as an LGBTQIA+ member's self-acceptance and sharing of their identity. This is a process that looks different for everyone. In order to come out to others, you need to come out to yourself first. The most important thing to remember: this is about you. This is a decision an individual makes when they feel safe and ready, without any outside pressure.

PERSONAL

SAFETY

CONTENT WARNING: THIS SECTION DEALS WITH INFORMATION RELATING TO

SEX TRAFFICKING, GROOMING, & OTHER POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE TOPICS.

Consent means giving permission to do something, especially when it involves another person. It's important to know consent is something you can't give when someone is pressuring or influencing you, when you've been using alcohol/drugs, or if you're asleep or unconscious. Someone must actively and clearly communicate that they consent. If you're not sure if someone consented, then they did NOT give consent.

Under Illinois law, anyone under 17 cannot give consent to sexual activities.

Internet Safety and Digital Media

The internet can be a risky place. It's important to understand that people on the internet may not be who they say they are, leaving you uncertain of who exactly you're interacting with. Even with people you trust or know offline, be sure to maintain a safe presence on the internet.

Unsolicited images

Another aspect of personal safety is protecting you and your friends from sharing or receiving explicit photos. Any form of nude photos or videos of someone under the age of 18 is child pornography, making it illegal to send to someone or to keep it yourself. Unsolicited sexual content can come in many forms, like photos, videos, and graphic or invasive messages. If someone sends you inappropriate media of a minor, it's important to remove it from your device and make sure they know you don't want to see it. If you need help or a person won't stop sending images, tell a trusted adult for support.

If you do send someone a nude photo, they may be able to keep copies of it without you knowing. Sometimes people "leak" other people's nudes, publishing them on public platforms or sending them to people the photos were not intended for. This can be done in a vengeful way, intending to hurt or upset the person in the photos. When someone releases someone else's nude photos or videos in a vengeful way, this is often referred to as "revenge porn." If someone uses your photos or videos as revenge porn, you can report anything posted to social media, contact local police, or reach out to a hotline, like one run by the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, for guidance and assistance.

If someone trusts you with their photos or videos, you shouldn't show them to other people without the permission of the person(s) in the photo. They sent you this because they trust you, and even if you are no longer close to that person, you should respect their privacy by not showing any photos or videos to other people.

Grooming and Trafficking

Some dangers of the internet can turn into in-person, "real-life" dangers too; two of these are grooming and trafficking. While grooming and trafficking often stem from online interactions, they also can start in person, so use this same caution when interacting with strangers face-to-face.

Grooming refers to adults who are interested in taking sexual advantage of young people, while trafficking generally refers to taking advantage of individuals and likely taking them away from their homes, often to force them into sex work or physical labor. Both groomers and traffickers may approach you online and ask personal questions. They also will be secretive and ask you not to tell people like your family and friends about your relationship. Be careful with information you share online, especially with overly-friendly strangers. Talk to a trusted adult if you're worried about someone who has been contacting you.

If someone you know is in a situation that you think might be grooming or trafficking—getting close with (potentially older) strangers, being secretive about who they talk to online, or even showing signs of abuse—and you think you can safely intervene, there are a few ways you can help:

- Talk with them about their situation and why you're concerned;
- Find a trusted adult to talk with;
- Call [the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888](https://www.humantraffickinghotline.org/) to get more help and advice for handling the situation.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy relationships are based on mutual respect and are free from violence, coercion (force), and intimidation. Healthy relationships apply to every type of relationship including romantic, friend, and familial relationships!

Toxic relationships consist of a partner (or partners) who act in ways that are emotionally, mentally, and/or physically damaging to others.

Boundaries are non-negotiable parts of any kind of healthy relationship. They are a set of personal rules about what you are comfortable with, and how you want to be treated. Each person's boundaries should be clearly discussed and respected throughout the entire relationship.



Disclaimer: Though healthy relationships often have similar characteristics, different people have varying levels of comfort and may not express their love/support in the same ways. This also applies to toxic/unhealthy relationships.

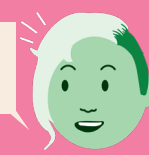
If you believe your loved one is a victim of an abusive relationship, it can help to sit down and have an honest conversation with them to try to gauge their perspective of the situation. If you need additional direction, don't forget to check out our resources.

	Healthy Relationships	Unhealthy Relationships
Familial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Members feel safe with one another ♥ Work together to solve conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ Manipulation of others for personal gain ♠ Competition or comparisons between members with intent to harm someone's confidence
Friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Friends are a support system for each other ♥ Respect boundaries and know when to give each other space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ "Friends" used for personal gain but otherwise ignored or not cared for ♠ Repeated insults in a harmful manner, even if part of a joke
Romantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Meaningful, honest, and consistent communication ♥ Partners draw support from one another BUT partners know their individual self-worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ Forced/encouraged isolation of a partner from their loved ones ♠ Excessive secret keeping within the relationship ♠ Physical or emotional abuse
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Consent is willfully and enthusiastically given every time ♥ Each person's boundaries are discussed and respected before and during sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♠ Lack of consent ♠ Sexual or emotional abuse ♠ No communication about contraception or other preventative measures

I might be biased, but I'd say we have a pretty healthy friendship!

I agree! We've never even had a single fight. Minus the soup incident...

That was 5th grade, you know I forgive you.



PREGNANCY



Abstinence is the decision to choose not to have sex or engage in sexual activity. Abstinence from vaginal intercourse is the only 100% effective form of birth control.

Menstruation/menstrual cycle is monthly bleeding that a person with ovaries and a uterus experiences, often called your “period.” During the menstrual cycle, the uterus lining builds up to prepare for pregnancy. If you do not get pregnant, then your period begins. When you menstruate, your body discards the buildup of the lining of your uterus (womb). This usually happens every month (roughly every 21-35 days).

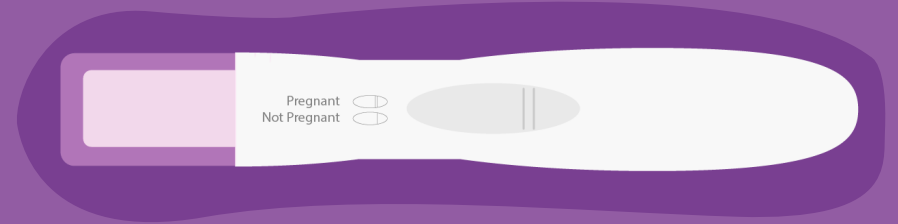
Pregnancy is the process when a baby develops in the uterus. Among other options, one way to become pregnant is having vaginal sex without using contraception (birth control), or when contraception is used incorrectly or fails. Pregnancy lasts about 9 months and causes many changes in the pregnant person's body throughout the process. It is important to learn the best practices for taking care of yourself during any pregnancy.

What to do if you think you are pregnant:

While some pregnant people experience no signs or symptoms, some common ones related to pregnancy can include: missing your period, throwing up or feeling nauseous, feeling very tired, or having swollen breasts.

If you think you're pregnant, you can purchase a pregnancy test at your local store, like Walgreens or CVS, or visit a doctor to get a pregnancy test if you feel comfortable.

Over the counter pregnancy tests claim to have a 99% success rate, but Mayo Clinic recommends taking two tests a week apart if you think you are pregnant and test negative the first time.



Pregnancy Options:

This decision should be based on you and your situation only. There are three typical options you can consider:

- Carrying the pregnancy to full term and providing for the baby after giving birth
- Carrying the pregnancy to full term and finding someone to adopt the baby after giving birth
- Having an abortion

If you are under 18, Illinois' Parental Notice of Abortion Act requires the clinic to notify your parent, grandparent, step-parent who lives with you, or legal guardian before performing the procedure. Those who cannot notify one of these adult family members can request a waiver from the court to have the procedure without notification. Contact the ACLU of Illinois' Judicial Bypass Coordination Project for information and help navigating this law.

Do your research before using clinics or a doctor's office for pregnancy and reproductive care:

- Make sure the clinic is reputable and will provide the services you are seeking.
- Understand payment and confidentiality options.
- Title X or Planned Parenthood clinics provide a wide range of low-cost medical care.

If you do decide to carry your pregnancy to term, be sure to do your research on how to stay healthy during pregnancy, which is called prenatal care. Prenatal care has a huge impact on the pregnant person's health and the health of the baby. A good place to start is not smoking or drinking while pregnant and making sure to get lots of rest, vitamins, and water!

PREGNANCY &

Contraception is medication or barrier method you can use to reduce your chance of becoming pregnant. Some of these forms also help protect you from sexually transmitted infections or help with symptoms of periods.

Some types of contraception can include:

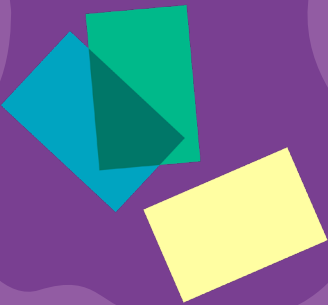
Internal or External Condoms

- Widely available, protects against pregnancy and STIs
- You do not have to be a certain age to buy condoms
- Check to make sure they are not expired or broken before using them



Dental Dams

- Used during oral sex to protect against STIs



Birth Control Pill

- Taken once a day 91-99% effective
- If you are over 12, you can get birth control without parental permission
- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs

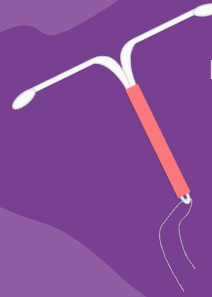


Other types are widely researched and are worth looking into!

REPRODUCTION

Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

- About 99% effective
- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs



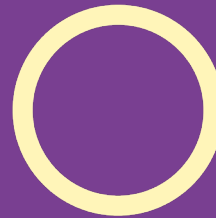
Diaphragm

- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs



Contraceptive Ring

- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs



Contraceptive Implant

- Long lasting
- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs



Emergency Contraception Pill

- Known as the "Morning After" or "Plan B" pill
- Used as backup if other contraception is forgotten or fails to work
- Protects against pregnancy but not STIs



I knew about condoms and the pill, but I didn't know there was so much more!



Me either, honestly. And the great part is that there are so many options that could fit anyone's lifestyle! Pretty cool, huh?

If you need emergency contraception, take Planned Parenthood's quiz to see which method is best for you!
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/online-tools/emergency-contraception>.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

(STIs) are infections that can be transmitted through sexual contact (bodily fluids). While many STIs present with common symptoms, such as sores, changes in discharge, itchiness, burning, or painful urination. Not all people will experience symptoms. Some people are not aware they are living with an STI until they are tested. The good news is there are many treatments available for STIs, and some, but not all, are even curable.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is an STI, but can also be acquired through non-sexual contact, like coming into contact with another person's blood. HIV is a virus which affects the body's ability to fight off infections. While there have been great advances in medicine to help treat HIV there is not currently a cure. If left untreated, HIV could progress to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). However, with proper medical care, people who are living with HIV can live long, healthy lives, and keep their sexual partners safe. Engaging in safe sex practices, taking medication like PrEP, and getting tested regularly are some ways to reduce your risk of acquiring HIV.

How do you get STIs?

Sexual contact with someone who is living with an STI, most often by unprotected sex including oral, vaginal, and anal sex, or skin-to-skin contact. STIs can be prevented by using barrier methods during sex like condoms and dental dams. Other contraceptives protect against pregnancy, but not necessarily STIs.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS, INCLUDING HIV

Symptoms and effects of STIs

Symptoms of STIs widely vary. Some common signs of infection are itchiness, burning sensations, fatigue, and painful urination or unusual color of sexual fluids like vaginal fluids or semen. In some cases, if left untreated, STIs can lead to more serious medical issues like impacting your ability to conceive in the future.

Treatment Options?

There are lots of options (oral medications, topical ointments, etc.) to treat STIs. If you think you have an STI, don't wait to get the help you need. Telling your parent or guardian can help connect you with treatment, but if that is not an option, seek help from another trusted adult or medical provider. Organizations like Planned Parenthood are great places to contact for treatment options and to be connected with resources.

If you are 12 and over, you can consent to confidential counseling and testing for the prevention and treatment of STIs. Healthcare providers are encouraged or sometimes are allowed to notify a parent or guardian about treatment needed. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider or trusted adult if you're worried about your parent or guardian finding out.

**DID YOU
KNOW THE
NEW SCIENCE
ON HIV?**

We now have medications available to help to prevent HIV transmission before and after exposure! With consistent treatment, people living with HIV are able to engage in sexual relationships without the fear of passing HIV to their sexual partners. Visit aidschicago.org to learn more.

ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSIVE, COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Now that you have learned about what comprehensive sex education looks like and what Illinois' new law includes, let's talk about how to advocate for sex education in your communities!

I have to admit, this was really interesting! I just don't understand why all schools don't teach sex ed like this.



I know right! Luckily, there are ways that students can advocate for more comprehensive sex ed. Hey... let's work together??

Pro-tip: The ACLU of Illinois can provide guidance, information, and resources to help you advocate with your school. Email advocacy@aclu-il.org to reach out for support!

Advocating for inclusive, comprehensive sex health education in your school
Schools are not required to teach sex education, but that does not mean you shouldn't use your voice to advocate for inclusive, comprehensive sex education in your school!

1

Find out if your school teaches sex education.

You can find out by:

- Talking to your fellow classmates
- Asking your teachers
- Asking your principal

2

If your school teaches sex education:

- Ask your teachers, principals, and other school professionals to make sure the way they are teaching sex ed is inclusive and comprehensive. Share information and resources (like this zine and the resources below!) with them.
- Ask those who set the curriculum for your school, whether it's the school board or principal, if they know about Illinois' new law that creates new standards for comprehensive sex education. If they don't know about the law, ask them if they can make updates and share resources with them.

3

If your school doesn't teach sex education, talk to your teachers, principals, and most importantly, your school board about the importance of teaching inclusive and comprehensive sex education and let them know about the new law.

Some examples of advocacy could look like:

- Providing resources (like factsheets or this zine!) on Illinois' new law to your school decision-makers
- Building a group of supportive students to contact decision-makers by phone or email
- Attending a school board meeting and sharing how you feel and what changes you want to see happen
- Creating a petition

Pro-tip: BE PERSISTENT. You may not get the result you want right away. Continuing to make your voice heard is the only way to create change.

RESOURCES

FIND ALL OF THESE LINKS AT WWW.ACLU-IL.ORG/TALK-RESOURCES

NATIONAL SEX ED STANDARDS

Second edition: <https://siecus.org/resources/national-sex-ed-standards-second-edition/>

ANATOMY, PHYSIOLOGY, ADOLESCENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Amaze videos on anatomy & physiology and puberty: <https://amaze.org/?topic=puberty>

Scarleteen on bodies: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/bodies>

IDENTITY

Amaze resources on sexual orientation: <https://amaze.org/?topic=sexual-orientation>

Amaze resources on gender identity: <https://amaze.org/?topic=gender-identity>

Scarleteen on gender: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/gender>

Scarleteen on sexual identity: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexual-identity>

InterACT: <https://interactadvocates.org/>

Intersex Justice Project: <https://www.intersexjusticeproject.org/>

Asexual Visibility and Education Network: <https://www.asexuality.org/>

Trans lifeline US: 1-877-565-8860

LGBT+ National Hotline: 1-888-843-4564

TrevorLifeline: 1-866-488-7386

Illinois Safe Schools Alliance: <https://www.ilsafeschools.org/>

Transition roadmap: <https://transcare.ucsf.edu/transition-roadmap>

GLADD transgender resources: <https://www.glaad.org/transgender/resources>

Stand with Trans: <https://standwithtrans.org/resources/>

PERSONAL SAFETY

Amaze resources on personal safety: <https://amaze.org/?topic=personal-safety>

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

Cyber Civil Rights Initiative: <https://www.cybercivilrights.org/ccri-crisis-helpline/>

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Amaze resources on healthy relationships: <https://amaze.org/?topic=healthy-relationships>

Scarleteen on relationships: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/relationships>

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) | www.thehotline.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline (Spanish): 1-800-942-6908

Information on healthy relationships: <https://www.joinonelove.org/>

Understanding domestic and dating violence: <https://stopthehurt.org/issues/domestic-dating-violence/>

PREGNANCY AND REPRODUCTION

Amaze resources on pregnancy and reproduction: <https://amaze.org/?topic=pregnancy-and-reproduction>

Scarleteen on pregnancy and parenting: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/pregnancy-and-parenting>

Start Early resources for families: <https://www.startearly.org/resources-families/programs/>

Adoption Center of Illinois: <https://www.adoptioncenterofillinois.org/adopting-a-child/supportive-resources/>

Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL): 1-877-200-PPIL | <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

Judicial Bypass Coordination Project: call 1-877-442-9727 | text 1-312-560-6607 | www.ilbypass.org

ICAN! (provides support accessing low or no cost birth control): ICAN4all.org

ACLU of Illinois Know Your Rights - Abortion in IL: <https://www.aclu-il.org/kyr-abortion>

National Abortion Federation (NAF): 1-800-772-9100 | <https://prochoice.org/>

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS, INCLUDING HIV

Amaze resources on STIs and HIV: <https://amaze.org/?topic=stds-and-hiv>

Scarleteen on sexual health: <https://www.scarleteen.com/article/sexual-health>

Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL): 1-877-200-PPIL | <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

HIV/AIDS Hotline In Illinois: 1-800- 243-2437

AIDS Foundation Chicago: <https://www.aidschicago.org>

National HIV information: 1-800-HIV(448)-0440 | hiv.gov

ADVOCACY

ACLU of Illinois Legislation Information: <https://www.aclu-il.org/en/legislation/sex-ed>

SIECUS Community Toolkit: <https://siecus.org/community-action-toolkit/>

Start a petition: <https://www.change.org/start-a-petition>

Learn more about school boards: <https://www.iasb.com/about-us/publications/pamphlets-and-tools/about-school-boards/>



You can find **THE TALK: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO SEX EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS** and other resources online at www.aclu-il.org/the-talk.

ACLU Illinois

