

Sex Ed Advocacy Planning and Sample Messages

The goal of advocacy for CAPP and PREP is to build a local base of support for sexual health education and access to family planning services, and to be prepared in case your program becomes controversial. Advocacy planning is a good activity for your implementation team. A solid plan might include:

- The individuals (e.g., school superintendent, PTA chair, sympathetic religious leader, etc.) and audiences (e.g. school community, particular religious congregations, etc.) you want to reach
- Internal audiences who may need to be educated (e.g., your agency's board and staff or your department's leadership and departmental staff)
- Frames to use, and frames to avoid (see resources below)
- The messages you believe will be most effective with each individual and audience
- The messengers who can best reach each audience
- Potential threats: people or organizations who might oppose your efforts; events or news stories that could derail your message
- Allies and champions, and the roles they are able and willing to play
- Other resources and strengths that can be utilized
- Opportunities for message delivery
- Next steps; who will do what by when

When Controversy Strikes

Any advocacy work you have done will help you in the event that public controversy does arise. If, for example, a group of parents organize against sex education, or a media story sensationalizes your work, you will be prepared if you already know your allies and resources, have solid messages based on the most useful frames, and have prepared your messengers.

In addition, you will want to be sure that your NYSDOH program adviser is aware of the situation as soon as possible. **The Department of Health may have resources to help you manage any public controversy, especially if it is taken up by the media, and it is important to keep them informed immediately – not after the fact.**

Your CAPP and PREP colleagues may also have experienced similar controversies. Reach out to them, and to your ACT for Youth support team, for support and ideas.

Sample Messages to Consider

Communities have a responsibility to support young people's health.

- CAPP and PREP projects are funded in communities with higher rates of sexually transmitted infections and adolescent pregnancy. A city [county/school] with high rates of STIs and early pregnancy is a city that is failing in its responsibilities to young people. Our community can

provide youth the tools, skills, and knowledge they need to stay healthy – that’s what our program is here to do.

Health and well-being include sexuality and sexual development.

- Sexuality is a normal, healthy part of being human. Sexual development is an essential part of adolescent development.

(More in **Understanding Puberty and Sexual Development:**

<https://actforyouth.net/adolescence/sexual-health/development.cfm>)

Sexual health education includes how we relate to others and how we want to be treated.

- When we say "sex ed" and "sexual health," we are talking about reaching the whole person. Our approach includes building emotional maturity, relationship skills, and personal values.

(More in **What is Sexual Health:** <https://actforyouth.net/adolescence/sexual-health/>)

Our program is effective.

- The program we are offering is evidence-based: It has been shown to produce results. Youth who go through our program are less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors.
- Sex education does not bring about an increase in sexual behavior. Students who participate in evidence-based sex education programs are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors.

(More in **EBPs for Pregnancy and STD/HIV Prevention Q&A:**

https://actforyouth.net/docs/providers/ebp_q-a-capp.pdf)

