

Since its inception, SIECUS has taken stands on major sexuality issues confronting society. SIECUS invites other organizations and individuals to join in affirming these statements and in working for their implementation.

Human Sexuality / Sexual Rights / Sexual Health / Sexuality Education / Culture and Society

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Human sexuality encompasses the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. Its various dimensions involve the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system; identity, orientation, roles, and personality; and thoughts, feelings, and relationships. Sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual, cultural, and moral concerns. All persons are sexual, in the broadest sense of the word.

SEXUALITY THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN

Sexual feelings, desires, and activities are present throughout the life cycle. SIECUS believes that all people have the right to education about sexuality, sexual health care, and sexual expression appropriate to their age and stage of life. Age-appropriate education and information concerning sexual feelings, attitudes, and behavior should be available to all individuals, their families, health care providers, and other caregivers.

SEXUALITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SIECUS believes that individuals with physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities have a right to education about sexuality, sexual health care, and opportunities for socializing and sexual expression. Health care workers and other caregivers must receive comprehensive sexuality education, as well as training in understanding and supporting sexual development, behavior, and related health care for individuals with disabilities. The policies and procedures of social agencies and health care delivery systems should ensure that services and benefits are provided to all persons without discrimination because of disability.

SEXUAL RIGHTS

Sexual rights are human rights, and they are based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings. Sexual rights include the right to bodily integrity, sexual safety, sexual privacy, sexual pleasure, and sexual health care; the right to make free and informed sexual and reproductive choices; and the right to have access to sexual information based on sound scientific evidence.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

SIECUS believes that individuals have the right to live in accordance with their sexual orientation whether they are bisexual, heterosexual, gay, or lesbian. The legal system should guarantee the civil rights and protection of all people, regardless of sexual orientation. Prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unethical and immoral.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUITY

SIECUS believes that gender equality and equity are fundamental human rights. Society must recognize how gender-based stereotyping, including prejudice toward transgender, transsexual, and intersex individuals, can result in harmful consequences, such as gender-based violence and sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. Gender-based stereotyping must be eliminated, and the use of gender-inclusive language promoted. The legal system should guarantee the civil rights and protection of all people, regardless of gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

ROMANTIC AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

SIECUS believes that individuals have the right to choose to enter into romantic and sexual relationships as well as the right to choose not to do so. SIECUS believes that all romantic and sexual relationships should be consensual between partners who are developmentally, physically, and emotionally capable of giving this consent. Responsible romantic and sexual relationships should be based on shared personal values, and should be consensual, non-exploitive, honest, pleasurable, and if any type of intercourse occurs, protected against unintended pregnancy and STDs. Because many adolescents are or will be sexually active, they should receive support and assistance in developing the skills to evaluate their readiness for mature romantic and sexual relationships.

MASTURBATION

SIECUS believes that masturbation is a natural, common, and non-harmful means of experiencing sexual pleasure. Masturbation can be a way of becoming comfortable with one's body and enjoying one's sexuality, whether or not in a sexual relationship. Masturbation is a safe alternative to shared sexual behavior. SIECUS believes that no one should be made to feel guilty for choosing or not choosing to masturbate.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

SIECUS believes coerced and exploitative sexual acts and behaviors such as rape, incest, sexual relations between adults and children, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment are always reprehensible. Information and education programs should teach means of preventing such acts, and communities should enforce laws to punish them. Communities should support treatment programs to help survivors and offenders as well as research to increase understanding of the causes and effects of sexual exploitation.

SEXUAL HEALTH

All people have a right to health care services that promote, maintain, and if needed, restore sexual and reproductive health. Health care providers should assess sexual and reproductive health needs and concerns as integral parts of each individual's health and wellness care and make appropriate resources available.

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL HEALTH

SIECUS believes that becoming a sexually healthy adult is a key developmental task of adolescence. Professionals, including educators, health care providers, and social service providers, should promote adolescent sexual health by providing accurate information and education about sexuality, and by assuring access to sexual and reproductive health care. Society can enhance adolescent sexual health by providing access to comprehensive sexuality education and affordable, sensitive, and confidential reproductive health care services.

ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

SIECUS believes that all people, regardless of age or income, should have access to affordable, confidential sexual health services including, but not limited to, access to methods of contraception and disease prevention, testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and prenatal care.

ABORTION

SIECUS believes that every woman, regardless of age or income, should have the right to obtain an abortion under safe, legal, affordable, easily accessible, confidential, and dignified conditions. Every woman is entitled to have full knowledge of the options available to her, and to obtain complete and unbiased information and counseling.

SIECUS believes that abortion counseling and services should be provided by professionals specially trained in this field. SIECUS believes that it is unethical for any organization to use anti-abortion propaganda, misinformation, manipulation, or fear and shame tactics to dissuade women facing unintended pregnancy from exercising their right to choose.

SIECUS further believes that violence against abortion providers and harassment intended to impede women's access to these providers are unconscionable attempts to undermine women's reproductive rights and should be decisively prosecuted by the justice system.

HIV/AIDS

SIECUS believes that the global HIV/AIDS pandemic needs to remain a top priority for governments, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic entities, corporations, academic institutions, medical professionals, scientists, the media, and societies around the world. Individuals need access to accurate information about HIV/AIDS, as well as evidence-based prevention programs and methods. HIV testing, treatment, and care must be widely accessible and affordable, and only provided with informed consent. All HIV/AIDS testing, treatment, and care and any related reporting requirements should be done in a manner that ensures the privacy and confidentiality of the individual. Governments and private entities must work together to ensure progress in reducing the spread of HIV and improving care and treatment options for those individuals already impacted by the pandemic.

HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS TRAINING

SIECUS believes that all health care practitioners should be well trained in the areas of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health. Professional training for all health care practitioners, including continuing education programs, should address medical, ethical, legal, and cultural aspects of sexuality. Health care practitioners are expected to provide care that is unbiased and meets the medical and psychological needs of each patient.

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Sexuality education is a lifelong process that begins at birth. Parents/caregivers, family, peers, partners, schools, religious organizations, and the media influence the messages people receive about sexuality at all stages of life.

All people have the right to accurate information and age- and developmentally appropriate education about sexuality. Sexuality education should address the biological, sociocultural, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality within the cognitive learning domain (information), the affective learning domain (feelings, values, and attitudes), and the behavioral learning domain (communication, decision-making, and other skills).

SCHOOL-BASED SEXUALITY EDUCATION

SIECUS believes that comprehensive school-based sexuality education that is appropriate to students' age, developmental level, and cultural background is an important part of the school curriculum at every grade. A comprehensive sexuality program will provide medically accurate information, recognize the diversity of values and beliefs represented in the community, and complement and augment the sexuality education children receive from their families, religious and community groups, and health care professionals.

TEACHER TRAINING

SIECUS believes that classroom teachers and community educators who teach about sexuality should be well trained on the principles, content, and best practices for providing sexuality education. Teachers should also have access to updated and current sexuality information, curricula, and materials.

SIECUS further believes that all pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers should receive sufficient training in human sexuality in order to be able to address potential issues and questions about sexuality.

PARENTS AS SEXUALITY EDUCATORS

SIECUS believes that parents and caregivers are—and ought to be—their children's primary sexuality educators. SIECUS recognizes that a number of factors, including lack of knowledge, skills, or comfort, may impede a parent's or caregiver's successful fulfillment of that role. SIECUS believes that communities, schools, faith-based institutions, the media, and professional sexuality educators should help parents by providing training, resources, understanding, and encouragement.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Sexuality is an intrinsic component of human identity. The variety of cultural beliefs, values, and customs related to sexuality has profound influence on both society and individuals. Cultural beliefs and norms are influenced and expressed through many institutions including families, communities, schools, faith-based organizations, and mass media. These institutions have an obligation to affirm sexuality in ways that support the sexual health and rights of all members of any society.

SEXUALITY AND RELIGION

SIECUS believes that religion can play a significant role in promoting an understanding of sexuality as an intrinsic part of all humans. Faith-based institutions are in a unique position to provide sexuality education. SIECUS further believes that religious and spiritual leaders and organizations have a responsibility to affirm and support the sexual rights of all members of their communities.

SEXUALITY AND THE MEDIA

SIECUS believes that the media has a responsibility to present the complexities of human sexuality at all stages of the life cycle in a manner that is medically accurate, sensitive to diversity, and free of exploitation, prejudice, gratuitous sexual violence, and dehumanizing sexual portrayals.

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT MATERIALS

SIECUS believes that sexually explicit visual, printed, or on-line materials can be valuable educational or personal aids when sensitively used in a manner appropriate to the viewer's age and developmental level. Such materials can help reduce ignorance and confusion and contribute to a positive concept of sexuality while supporting the sexual rights of all. However, the use of violence, exploitation, or degradation, or the portrayal of children in sexually explicit materials is reprehensible.

SIECUS believes that adults should have the right to access sexually explicit materials for personal use. Legislative and judicial efforts to prevent the production or distribution of sexually explicit materials endanger constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of speech and press, and could be employed to restrict the appropriate professional use of such materials by sexuality educators, therapists, and researchers.