

If Arkansas is to **reduce poverty** and **increase opportunity** for its children and families, we must reduce the state's **teen birth rate**.

Increasing opportunity for young people in Arkansas means tackling the state's teen birth rate, which has been far too high for far too long. A hodgepodge of local policies and inequitable education is getting in our way. Lowering the teen birth rate is one of the smartest things we can do to secure our state's future. We know from research that addressing this problem will boost high school graduation rates, lead to better physical and mental health outcomes and improve economic security.

The good news is we know what to do, and a new coalition of partners is pointing the way. The Sexual Health Education Coalition is a diverse group that represents parents, health providers, abuse prevention experts, and advocates for marginalized groups, who all came together to make recommendations that form a blueprint for a better way.

When the group began its work, members quickly realized that our state has a long way to go to improve access to age-appropriate, effective, and equitable sexual health education. They realized that changes are needed to ensure that young people have the information they need help prevent sexual abuse, as well. Thinking long-term, coalition members acknowledged that dramatic improvement won't happen overnight. That's why NOW is the time to begin taking steps to improve the quality of education that young people in Arkansas receive.

Sexual Health Education in Arkansas: A Blueprint for the Future outlines the current landscape for sexual health education in Arkansas and how that compares to best practices nationally. It includes a list of recommendations from community-level services to statewide policy change and a timeline for taking pragmatic action.

Securing a Bright Future for Young Arkansans Depends on Sexual Health Education

Coalition Offers Blueprint for Moving Forward



Follow the QR code or visit aradvocates.org to download the full report.



The timeline below is one way Arkansas could work to improve our sexual health education system. We encourage you to follow the QR code to learn more about what each action entails and how it could be accomplished.



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Arkansas Sexual Health Education Coalition Timeline for Action

- 2024** Conduct greater research and data collection; support existing out-of-school programs
- 2025** Move toward menstrual equity; involve parents at an early age; proactive child abuse training and programs; support access to sexual violence prevention programs
- 2026** Create an Arkansas-based nonprofit focused on improving sexual health education; conduct an audit of existing sexual health education curricula; involve medical providers more thoughtfully
- 2027** Create new requirements to improve current school-based sexual health education
- 2028** Propose legislation that supports the development of teachers' social-emotional teaching
- 2029** Revitalize local education requirements; push for greater inclusivity in sexual health education
- 2030** Allow school-based health centers to provide students with sexual health information and resources
- 2031** Move toward comprehensive school-based sexual health education

Understanding that substantial change is needed to reduce teen pregnancy, increase access to contraception, and introduce medically accurate and age-appropriate sexual health education, we hope the blueprint inspires policy makers and advocates to realize what could be reality here in Arkansas to ensure that every young person is empowered to take control of their future.