

Sex Education Advisory Boards Commonly Asked Questions

What is the legal requirement for a sex education advisory board in Michigan school districts?

Mandate for an advisory board. *A school district shall not offer this [sex education] instruction unless a sex education advisory board is established by the board of the school district.* §380.1507(5)

Composition of advisory board. *The board of a school district shall determine terms of service for the sex education advisory board, the number of members to serve on the advisory board, and a membership selection process that reasonably reflects the school district population, and shall appoint 2 co-chairs for the advisory board, at least 1 of whom is a parent of a child attending a school operated by the school district. At least 1/2 of the members of the sex education advisory board shall be parents who have a child attending a school operated by the school district, and a majority of these parent members shall be individuals who are not employed by a school district. The board of a school district shall include pupils of the school district, educators, local clergy, and community health professionals on the sex education advisory board.* §380.1507(5)

Notice of meetings. *Written or electronic notice of a sex education advisory board meeting shall be sent to each member at least 2 weeks before the date of the meeting.* §380.1507(6)

Role of advisory board. The advisory board shall do all of the following:

- ◆ *Establish program goals and objectives for pupil knowledge and skills that are likely to reduce the rates of sex, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. This subdivision does not prohibit a school district from establishing additional program goals and objectives that are not contrary to this section, section 1169, or section 1507b.*
- ◆ *Review the materials and methods of instruction used and make recommendations to the board of the school district for implementation. The advisory board shall take into consideration the school district's needs, demographics, and trends, including, but not limited to, teenage pregnancy rates, sexually transmitted disease rates, and incidents of student sexual violence and harassment.*
- ◆ *At least once every 2 years, evaluate, measure, and report the attainment of program goals and objectives established under subdivision (a). The board of a school district shall make the resulting report available to parents in the school district.* §380.1507(5a)

What are the roles and responsibilities of advisory board members?

In general, advisory board members are expected to:

- ◆ Regularly attend advisory board meetings and prepare for being an effective member at the meetings as needed.
- ◆ Seek accurate and current information regarding content and instructional strategies that will help them make informed decisions as board members and practical recommendations to the board of education based on best practice.
- ◆ Be advocates and spokespersons for the board decisions and the adopted program.
- ◆ Share ideas and concerns and work cooperatively in a way that maintains the board as a partnership of people who are willing to work toward healthy sexual development of youth and reducing sexual risk behaviors.
- ◆ Support the public hearing process for proposed program revisions.
- ◆ Contribute to an evaluation plan and report regarding attainment of program goals and objectives.
- ◆ Respect the decisions of the board of education regarding their recommendations.

What helps the advisory board to stay focused and on task?

- ◆ Respectful and welcoming board leadership and conduct of members.
- ◆ An understanding of the purpose of the board and the responsibilities of the individual members.
- ◆ A mission statement that has been reached by consensus and can be reviewed when not all agree on an issue.
- ◆ Established board processes and procedures.
- ◆ Established tasks, commitment to the priority of completing the tasks, and established deadlines.
- ◆ Meetings that build enthusiasm for the topic and generate commitment and a feeling of accomplishment from the participants.
- ◆ A process that capitalizes on the unique expertise of all members.
- ◆ A meeting environment that allows for healthy discussions and disagreement, but also facilitates group decision-making based on an agreed upon approach (e.g., consensus, majority).
- ◆ A meeting calendar set ahead of time to avoid conflicts with other meetings.
- ◆ Meeting reminder notices. The legislation requires that written or electronic meeting notices be sent to each advisory board member at least two weeks prior to a meeting.
- ◆ Published agendas.
- ◆ Timely follow-up to issues and questions raised.
- ◆ Respect for busy schedules and commitments to families and careers/jobs of members.
- ◆ Starting and ending meetings on time.
- ◆ Prepared and available materials.
- ◆ Feedback from the board of education regarding progress of the advisory board.

What is the relationship between the sex education advisory board and the local school board?

- ◆ The advisory board makes recommendations to the local school board regarding materials and methods used in instruction.
- ◆ Prior to board action, the district must hold at least two public hearings on proposed revisions, at least a week apart, in the manner required under Section 1201 for board meetings.
- ◆ The local school board adopts recommendations and sets district policy for the program of instruction. §380.1507(6)

Can the district combine health-related committees?

Some districts consider combining the sex education advisory board with other district-level health-related committees such as the wellness policy committee or the coordinated school health team. The district should consider pros and cons of consolidating committees. Pros may include: fewer people needed to sit on district wide committees, less district costs in human resources, greater communication across committees, broader understanding of district-wide health issues and programs, and fewer meetings for those on all committees. Cons may include: too much work for one committee to accomplish, confusion about purpose of committee and roles of committee members, lack of committee member commitment to broadened focus, and members burning out from too much work.

For more information on HIV/STD Education in Michigan Schools, go to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) web site, www.michigan.gov/mde, click "K-12 Curriculum", click "Health Education", and click "HIV/STD and Sexuality Education". Questions should be directed to Laurie Bechhofer, MDE Consultant, 517-335-7252, bechhoferl@Michigan.gov.