

# Position Statement



## Ontario's Health and Physical Education Curriculum

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### Background

In September 2015, the Government of Ontario implemented a revised Ontario Elementary Health and Physical Education Curriculum. The curriculum update, the first since 1998, followed other provinces, such as Nova Scotia, Quebec and Saskatchewan.

The current Government of Ontario has reverted to the 1998 version, pending a consultation process to revise the curriculum.

### Our Position

As a healthcare organization providing services and support to diverse communities that include youth, LGBT2SQ individuals and newcomers to Canada, Sherbourne's healthcare practitioners and service providers constantly see and hear about the health impacts of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, as well as the health risks associated with inadequate access to health information.

Research evidence demonstrates that:

- Newcomer youth are less likely to access sexual health services than Canadian-born youth, instead seeking informal sources for answers to their sexual health questions, increasing their health-related risks.
- LGBTQ youth report experiencing harassment and discrimination in school environments, contributing to increased disparities in their health and wellbeing and placing them at risk for higher rates of depression and anxiety, substance use and suicidality.
- The absence of sexual diversity in school-based sexual health education has been linked to homophobic and transphobic bullying, leading to higher absenteeism and dropout rates for LGBTQ youth.

- A lack of diversity in sexual health education results in LGBTQ youth not learning critical information about their health, which is problematic because sexually diverse youth also report higher risk behaviour.
- Same-sex instruction can lower sexual risk behaviours, particularly surrounding HIV education.

We have previously stated our support for the 2015 curriculum, which we believe is respectful, inclusive, and above all consistent with health evidence. It provides safe space for discussion about diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, different types of families, consent and safer sex as it relates to young people's health.

We believe that an evidence-based, factual approach to health and physical education plays an important role in protecting the safety and health outcomes of young people.