



Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health

Standing Public Policies 2010

The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health takes the following positions on policy issues that have an impact on or intersect with our mission to work in partnership with youth to advocate sound policies and practices that support a positive approach to adolescent sexual health and parenting. While ICAH may not actively engage in activities to address all these issues, staff will offer support to colleague organizations working to address them or may take public positions on relevant legislation, regulations, or budget allocations.

Adolescent Sexual Health and Parenting

ICAH promotes a positive approach to adolescent sexual health by seeking to ensure that young people have access to the information, services, and support needed to maintain healthy lives. Services consist of confidential access to health care, including, but not limited to, the full range of reproductive health care, mental health screening and treatment, and substance abuse treatment, regardless of ability to pay.

Reproductive health care involves, among many services, contraception, medical and surgical abortion, prenatal care, and screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Additionally, access to sexuality education and protection from exploitation is critical to supporting adolescent sexual health.

Furthermore, ICAH supports policies and programs that assist pregnant and parenting youth in caring for themselves and their children, completing their education, and providing a safe and stable home for their families. ICAH believes that pregnant and parenting youth deserve dignity, respect, and support from their families, communities, and public institutions. ICAH takes the following policy positions related to adolescent sexual health and parenting:

Child Care, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – to support child care services for adolescent parents.

Disease Prevention: ICAH supports policies that create, expand, and enhance community and school-based programs focused on preventing HIV/AIDS and the transmission of other STIs through education, outreach, skills-building, harm reduction counseling, public awareness and social marketing campaigns, and the provision of prevention supplies including, but not limited to, male and female condoms, dental dams, and birth control.

Disease Prevention, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – to create and maintain community and school-based prevention programs that utilize methods and interventions that are proven and evidence-based or promising and innovative.

Domestic and Family Violence: ICAH supports policies that protect young people from the physical and mental harm that comes from domestic and/or family violence. These policies may include, but are not limited to, increased penalties for the perpetrators of violence, increased treatment for the perpetrators of violence, or increased ability for young people to advocate for their own emancipation, removal from a violent home, or access to confidential mental and physical health care services.

Health Care, Adolescent Consent: ICAH supports policies that allow adolescents to consent to their own confidential health care, including pap smears, STI and HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, contraception, HPV vaccination, prenatal care, and abortion. ICAH supports the right of adolescents to confidentially consent to their own and their children's health care.

Health Care, Adolescent Health Professionals: ICAH supports policies that facilitate adolescent access to health

specialists who are trained to provide appropriate and confidential care to youth.

Health Care, Adolescent Health Clinics: ICAH supports policies that facilitate the creation, stabilization, and expansion of community or school-based health clinics that specialize in adolescent medicine and operate in a youth-friendly manner.

Health Care, Cultural Competence: ICAH supports policies that facilitate adolescent access to culturally competent mental and physical health care that meets their unique needs based on their cultural and social identities.

Health Care, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – to provide information and access to confidential health care services for adolescents, regardless of their ability to pay.

LGBTQI Education: ICAH opposes programs that limit information and education on issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) youth.

LGBTQI Mental Health: ICAH opposes public support for programs that institutionalize youth against their will or force youth to undergo psychological therapy to change their sexual orientation.

Mental Health: ICAH supports policies that facilitate adolescent access to confidential mental health screening and treatment.

Mental Health, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – for the provision of confidential mental health screening and treatment of adolescents.

Public Education, Sexual Assault/Harassment: ICAH supports policies that require schools and educational systems to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the safety of youth who may be victims of sexual or physical assault as well as sexual harassment.

Public Education, Coordinated School Health: ICAH supports policies that promote the implementation of coordinated school health programs based on the CDC Coordinated School Health model consisting of eight interactive components geared to improve the health of and reduce risky behaviors by school-aged youth: Health Education, Physical Education, Health Services, Nutrition Services, Counseling, Psychological and Social Services, Healthy School Environment, Health Promotion for Staff, Parent/Community Involvement.

Public Education, Health Funding: ICAH support the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – to create and sustain health-related education and services at all public schools, including sexuality education programs and school-based clinics.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth, Public Education: ICAH supports the right of pregnant and parenting youth to complete their education without discrimination from their schools or educators and supports policies that require schools and educational systems to accommodate the needs of pregnant and parenting youth.

Pregnant and Parenting Teens, Public Accommodations: ICAH supports policies that promote and protect pregnant and parenting youth from discrimination in public accommodations.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state and local – to provide young parents with income support, subsidized housing, food and nutrition assistance, child care and other services necessary to ensure that they and their children are able to grow up in a healthy and stable environment.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Financial support for young parents should be available regardless of the number of children they have, their living situation, or their educational status.

Reproductive Justice, Abortion: ICAH supports policies that ensure unrestricted access to confidential medical and surgical abortion services prior to the viability of the fetus for all women, regardless of age. ICAH believes that after a fetus becomes viable, as determined by a woman's doctor in his or her best medical judgment, pregnancy termination must remain available and accessible to preserve the health or life of a pregnant woman, regardless of age, and that all women must be able to confidentially consent to such care.

Reproductive Justice, Health: ICAH supports policies that ensure unrestricted, easily accessible, affordable, confidential, and high-quality reproductive health care, including, but not limited to, contraception, medical and surgical abortion (see policy on Reproductive Justice, Abortion), and non-prescriptive access to emergency contraception. ICAH opposes all policies that seek to limit a minor's access to these services or imposes parental consent or notification requirements.

School-Based Health Centers: ICAH supports policies that facilitate the creation, maintenance, and expansion of school-based health centers that provide access to general health care, sexual health care, mental health screening and referral, and basic health education. ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – for the creation, maintenance, and expansion of these centers.

Sexual Assault: ICAH supports policies that create or increase penalties for those who commit sexual assault and policies that promote, expand, and enhance services to support survivors of sexual assault.

Sexual Harassment: ICAH supports policies that create or increase appropriate penalties for those who engage in sexual harassment and that promote, expand, and enhance services to support victims of sexual harassment.

Sexual Health Care, Right to Access: ICAH opposes any policies that seek to limit a minor's right to access confidential reproductive healthcare by, for example, requiring parental notification or consent, mandatory waiting periods, mandatory counseling, or any other means.

Sexual Health Care, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – for the full range of sexual health care regardless of a minor's age or ability to pay. Public funds should support medical and surgical abortion (see policy on Reproductive Justice, Abortion), sterilization, contraception, STI and HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, gynecologic and obstetric care, and counseling on fertility and family size. All public health insurance programs, including Medicaid, Medicare, Family Care, and KidCare, should provide coverage for sexual health care.

Sexuality Education: ICAH supports policies that require teaching responsible sexuality education that is medically-accurate, age-appropriate, and includes information on abstinence, contraception, decision-making, relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other topics that prepare adolescents to make healthy decisions about their sexuality. ICAH believes that sexuality education should be part of a K-12 school curriculum.

Sexuality Education, Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs: ICAH opposes any legislation that sets standards for sexuality education that preclude a comprehensive, medically-accurate, and age-appropriate approach to this topic, including, but not limited to, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

Sexuality Education, Public Funding: ICAH supports the availability of public funds – federal, state, and local – for schools, local health departments, and community- and faith-based organizations for the provision of medically-accurate, age-appropriate sexuality education. ICAH opposes the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – for abstinence-only programs.

Sex Trade: ICAH supports policies that create or increase penalties for those who profit or benefit from adolescents involved in the sex trade. ICAH also supports policies that promote, expand, and enhance services to support youth exploited by the sex trade industry.

Substance Abuse: ICAH supports policies that create opportunities for youth who use or abuse substances to receive

confidential treatment services including counseling, detoxification services, and in-patient care when necessary. ICAH opposes increased penalties for youth struggling with addiction and policies that penalize young women who use or abuse substances while pregnant.

Substance Abuse, Prevention: ICAH supports harm reduction as an appropriate approach to substance abuse prevention. Harm reduction programs should include factual information and practical education to help youth develop the skills necessary to make healthy decisions.

Substance Abuse, Public Funding: ICAH supports the use of public funds – federal, state, and local – for services designed to prevent or treat substance use and abuse.

Youth Dating Violence: ICAH supports policies that establish or increase penalties for perpetrators of violence against their romantic or sexual partners and that promote, expand, and enhance services to support survivors of youth dating violence.

Allied Issues

ICAH is part of a larger reproductive justice movement working to equip people with the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about their gender, bodies, and sexuality for themselves, their families, and their communities. ICAH believes reproductive justice is an integral part of a broader human rights framework and must align with other social justice movements to address the intersections of identities and the multilayered impact of oppression.

ICAH tracks policy developments on a range of issues that may not directly impact but are related to adolescent sexual health and of concern to our staff, youth, board of directors, colleagues, and supporters. ICAH may focus resources on any of these issues if a situation arises where our efforts are needed to protect or promote the rights of young people. ICAH takes the following policy positions related to reproductive justice and human rights:

Children's Justice: ICAH supports policies that protect the human rights of children, including but not limited to food, education, housing, health care, association with both biological parents, protection from abuse and neglect, and age- and developmentally-appropriate criminal laws.

Disability Justice: ICAH supports policies that promote accessibility and facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society, including education, employment, housing, health care, and public accommodation.

Economic Security: ICAH supports the right of all individuals to be financially stable and have access to public assistance and social service programs.

Environmental Justice: ICAH supports policies that create safe physical environments that promote healthy living and are free of toxic chemicals and other pollutants.

Human Trafficking: ICAH supports policies that establish or increase penalties for those who profit or benefit from engaging in human trafficking. ICAH also supports policies that facilitate the provision of support services to victims of human trafficking.

Immigrant Justice: ICAH supports policies that address immigrant reform in a sensible, humane way. ICAH supports broad immigration reform that enables people to emigrate through a safe, legal process, ends raids and sudden deportations, cuts through existing family backlogs, allows immigrants to access needed social services like health care, and adequately addresses undocumented immigrants already in the U.S. as well as protects our borders and enforces our laws.

Juvenile Justice: ICAH is concerned about the impact the juvenile justice system has on adolescents, both during and

after incarceration. ICAH supports policies that work to create a more humane juvenile justice system focused on education, rehabilitation, and supportive re-entry into the community.

LGBTQI Marriage: ICAH supports the rights of LGBTQI persons to marry and adopt children.

LGBTQI Justice: ICAH supports policies that facilitate the full inclusion of LGBTQI and gender non-conforming youth and adults in all aspects of society, including education, employment, housing, health care, and public accommodation.

Non-Discrimination: ICAH opposes discrimination in all forms and supports policies that seek to end harassment and discrimination based on age, color, race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, religion, marital status, parental status, physical or mental disability, medical status, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression.

Public Education: ICAH supports policies that ensure the right of all students to obtain an appropriate education at no cost and free from discrimination, harassment, and physical harm.

Public Education, Homeless Youth: ICAH supports the right of all adolescents to complete their education. ICAH supports policies that require schools and educational systems to ensure that homeless and/or transitory youth can access the full range of educational services.

Public Education, Funding Reform: ICAH supports quality education for all children. ICAH supports equitable per pupil funding across school districts.

Public Education, Zero Tolerance Policies: ICAH is concerned that zero tolerance policies in schools for rule infractions do not allow consideration of the context in which a violation is committed. ICAH supports the creation of school policies that ensure safety while allowing for full consideration of circumstances before penalties are given.

Women's Justice: ICAH supports policies that facilitate the full participation of and opportunities for women in all aspects of society, including education, employment, housing, health care, and public accommodation.