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Statement on sexual and gender-affirming health services for youth from Sexual Health Nova Scotia's network of sexual health centres

Sexual Health Nova Scotia encompasses a network of sexual health services across the province, which provide a range of services related to sexual, gender and reproductive health to Nova Scotians, including youth. A vital aspect of the work we do is education, for people of all ages and identities. One way that we provide education for young people is through engagement with local schools. There are a few ways that this work takes place, including:

- classroom presentations on topics such as puberty, consent, healthy relationships and safe sex practices (as requested by individual schools and in line with grade-specific curriculum outcomes);
- programming opportunities (depending on the capacity of individual centres);
- support services and healthcare navigation for individual youth (as requested by schools or by students' self-referral);
- and the provision of resource materials, safe sex supplies, and gender-affirming products (depending on the capacity of individual centres).

It is our belief that all students in middle and high school in Nova Scotia deserve access to comprehensive and inclusive sexual health education, and we support the schools in meeting the grade-specific health curriculum outcomes through our expertise in this material. Our centres provide safe sex supplies, such as condoms, dams, and lube, to youth in an effort to promote

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Cape Breton Centre for Sexual Health
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Halifax Sexual Health Centre
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Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland County
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South Shore Sexual Health
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Sheet Harbour Sexual Health Centre
(902) 885 3693
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Pictou County Sexual Health Centre
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safe sex practices, reduce the spread of sexually-transmitted infections and prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Included in this education is understanding the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity. We are committed to best practices in healthcare for supporting transgender and gender diverse youth, including providing access to gender-affirming care. An essential element of our work, within the scope of our organization, is to provide supportive services to gender-diverse and trans youth when they engage with our programming in both schools and the community. This means celebrating trans and gender diverse youth for who they are, advocating for their health and safety, and actively working against transphobia, misinformation and discrimination in our schools and communities. We also hope to reduce the experience of gender dysphoria for trans and gender diverse youth by providing them with education and resources that affirm their identities and support them in whatever aspects of social or medical transition they wish to undertake. Cisgender (non-trans) youth also benefit from education about these products and about the experiences of their trans peers, which helps to prevent transphobic bullying and discrimination.

Our work is supported by and aligned with, the NS Department of Education's Healthy Living curriculum and resource *Guidelines for Supporting Transgender and Gender-nonconforming Students*, The NS Department of Health & Wellness, The Mental Health Foundation of NS, our federal affiliate Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, and many community-based

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organizations in NS who share our values and goal to champion positive and inclusive sexual, gender and reproductive healthcare and education for all Nova Scotians.

For more information please contact Leigh Heide, Provincial Coordinator:
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