

What SERC Believes about ...

Sexuality

Sexuality is a complex, integral part of life. It includes all aspects of who we are – our values and beliefs, bodies, desires, relationships, gender, and our thoughts and feelings about all of these. Our sexuality naturally shifts and changes throughout our lives. It is affected by our understanding of the culture/cultures in which we live and our life experiences. Awareness of our sexuality and how we express it is a key determinant of our own health and wellness.

A Pro-Choice Approach

All individuals have the fundamental human right to access objective and competent sexual and reproductive health information and services. We have the right to make the sexual choices and medical decisions that best align with our values and beliefs. SERC supports and defends a pregnant person's right to choose abortion, adoption, or parenting.

Consent

We own our bodies and the right to decide whether, when, where and with whom to engage in sexual touching, talking, or gestures with others. Consent must be positive, ongoing and always respected in person and online/digitally. SERC supports federal guidelines and legislation on age and capability of consent for sexual activity.

Sexuality Education

All individuals have the right to comprehensive sexuality education that supports them in making informed choices for themselves. SERC is committed to providing comprehensive education which is inclusive, culturally safe, and anti-oppressive to effectively respond to society's diversity.

Accessibility

Services must be provided in a way that is free of discrimination based on any perceived or real identity characteristic. This includes but is not limited to age, race, color, sexual orientation, ability, gender; gender identity and/or gender expression, status related to sexually transmitted and blood borne infections, religion, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, immigration status, occupation, employment status, ancestry, language, marital status, family status, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions, criminal conviction, residency, socio-economic status, or political belief.¹ SERC is committed to striving toward the elimination of barriers to accessing sexual health information.

Sexual Exploitation

SERC acknowledges that sexual exploitation can impact people of all ages. The practice of using children and youth for sexual acts is abuse, is exploitative, and is illegal. Terms such as "child prostitution" or "youth sex trade" diminish the seriousness of these crimes.



Sexualization

SERC believes that defining or referring to a person as strictly a sexual object is deeply harmful. Peoples' sexuality and their bodies should be respected as being complex and whole.

SERC also believes that the media sexualizes children when they are manipulated into being excessively interested in adult defined sexuality and sexual behaviour. This pressure can negatively affect children's sexual development.

Approaches in Our Work

Our approaches to program development incorporate the following philosophies:

- A sex positive approach validates a person's worth and encourages working toward a more life enhancing relationship with their sexuality. Sex positivity supports each person's right to define their sexuality on their own terms, use their own language about their bodies and desires, and engage in consensual sexual activities that they desire without shame or judgment.
- Cultural Competence involves examining the power relations within the larger culture, within the agency, and within interactions between SERC staff and community/clients. Cultural competence is an ongoing self-examination whose purpose is to create safety for people and their own perceptions and experiences. In education settings SERC staff strive to understand the meaning and cultural context of participants' understanding of their sexuality and related issues.
- Population Health recognizes that many interrelated factors and conditions (including gender, socioeconomic, political and cultural) contribute to health. It is an approach that aims to improve the health of a community and to reduce inequities in health status among communities.²
- Community-Based Participation: Effective programs are developed with meaningful participation of community members in identifying their concerns and needs around the issues of sexual and reproductive health.
- Health Promotion facilitates a process of supporting people to increase control over, and to improve, their health.³
- Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies that can be used to meet people 'where they are at' in order to engage them in reducing the harms associated with risky behaviours. Harm reduction encourages and supports people in their efforts to reduce harm to themselves and their communities, reduce risks to their health, and increase safer behaviours.
- Trauma informed principles include an understanding that trauma is pervasive and can profoundly affect individuals, families, communities, cultures, and institutions/organizations. Trauma can also be intergenerational. Trauma-informed programs are based on an understanding of the vulnerabilities or triggers of trauma survivors in order to avoid re-traumatization.

¹ adapted from Manitoba Human Rights Code

² adapted from Public Health Agency of Canada website, Dec. 14, 2012

³ adapted from Ottawa Charter, World Health Organization