

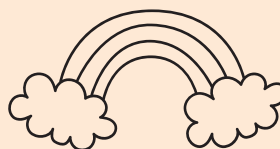
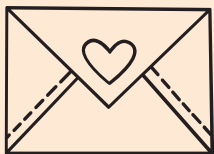


# SexEd Works

Let's Fight for the Next Generation

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A toolkit for how to ensure all Chicago Public School youth have access to comprehensive sexual education.



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7. Youth Guidance
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**HEALING  
TO ACTION**

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to join the campaign

# Foreword

Healing to Action (HTA) is a Chicago-based, grassroots organization working to end gender-based violence by building the leadership and collective power of the communities most impacted through leadership development and grassroots organizing, and training and technical assistance. HTA centers the communities most impacted including Black and brown survivors, LGBTQ+, immigrant and low-income survivors, and survivors with disabilities.

As survivors, we want to disrupt the cycle of gender-based violence for the next generation by ensuring that youth and their caregivers have access to life-saving sexual health education around consent and healthy relationships. For us, learning these concepts as adults transformed how we understood healthy relationships and consent, and motivated us to ensure the youth in our lives and in our communities, have the same knowledge and tools.

The SexEd Works campaign works towards a future where children do not experience the same violence as their parents or grandparents experienced by ensuring that funding and resources are directed towards the implementation of comprehensive sexual education, that communities have the tools to hold institutions like the Chicago Public School system accountable, and that sexual health education has a strong component of engaging caregivers to build a culture of consent in the community.

Through this guide, we hope to share our experience fighting to ensure all youth and community members, regardless of their zip code, have access to comprehensive sexual health education. We hope that our lessons learned will shine a light on some potential strategies and tools you can take on right now to continue the fight in your community.

—HTA Survivor Leaders

# The Current State of Comprehensive Sexual Education in Our Communities

## What is comprehensive sexual health education?

Comprehensive sexual education is age appropriate, sexual health education for youth in K–12th grades. The information is medically accurate, designed to motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their sexual health; and prevent disease and reduce sexual health-related risk behaviors while allowing students to develop developmentally appropriate sexual health-related knowledge, attitudes, and skills. In addition to other positive impacts, comprehensive sex ed has been shown to lower the risk of sexual assault.

## How is sexual health education being implemented in Chicago Public Schools (CPS)?

### The short answer is, it's not being implemented.

The current implementation of the comprehensive sexual education policy in Chicago Public Schools is woefully inadequate to prevent gender-based violence in our communities. The 2018 Healthy CPS survey data on sexual health education showed that 70% of CPS schools did not fully implement the comprehensive sexual education policy at the time. Many of the schools are on Chicago's South and West sides, impacting primarily Black and brown youth. This lack of access to sexual health education poses a significant barrier to the economic mobility and stability of some of Chicago's most marginalized youth.

In 2020, CPS adopted a new sexual health education (SHE) policy.<sup>1</sup> In broad strokes, the policy promotes education around topics vital to preventing gender-based violence, such as consent,<sup>2</sup> gender identity and sexual orientation,<sup>3</sup> and healthy relationships and abuse.<sup>4</sup> The policy also directs schools to accommodate students with disabilities by training at least one special education teacher,<sup>5</sup> promotes teachers creating inclusive spaces,<sup>6</sup> and mentions addressing inequities across schools.<sup>7</sup>

### But the new policy and guidelines fall far short.

The majority of implementation falls to principals—from designating staff to be trained to strategizing how SHE instruction is completed to ensuring reporting requirements are met—with no oversight or support.<sup>8</sup> The implementation guidelines require only two teachers per school to receive training to teach SHE.<sup>9</sup> While some schools have less than 200 students, others have more than 1,000—yet all schools need only two trained teachers.

### The training is only THREE HOURS and once teachers complete it, they do not have to do any more training for FOUR YEARS.<sup>10</sup>

While technically students should receive every lesson in the curriculum in every grade, schools often just check off the lesson boxes without ensuring compliance. The policy allows for hiring approved outside consultants who can bring greater expertise,<sup>11</sup> but without proper oversight from principals this may mean students really only receive part of the curriculum.

1. <https://policy.cps.edu/download.aspx?ID=57> [2020 SHE Policy].

2. See, e.g., 2020 SHE Policy at 1, 2.

3. See, e.g., 2020 SHE Policy at 3; OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 9; Scope and Sequence at 5, 6, 8.

4. See, e.g., OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 12; Scope and Sequence at 7, 11.

5. 2020 SHE Policy at 2; OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 14.

6. 2020 SHE Policy at 3.

7. 2020 SHE Policy at 1.

8. See OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 14.

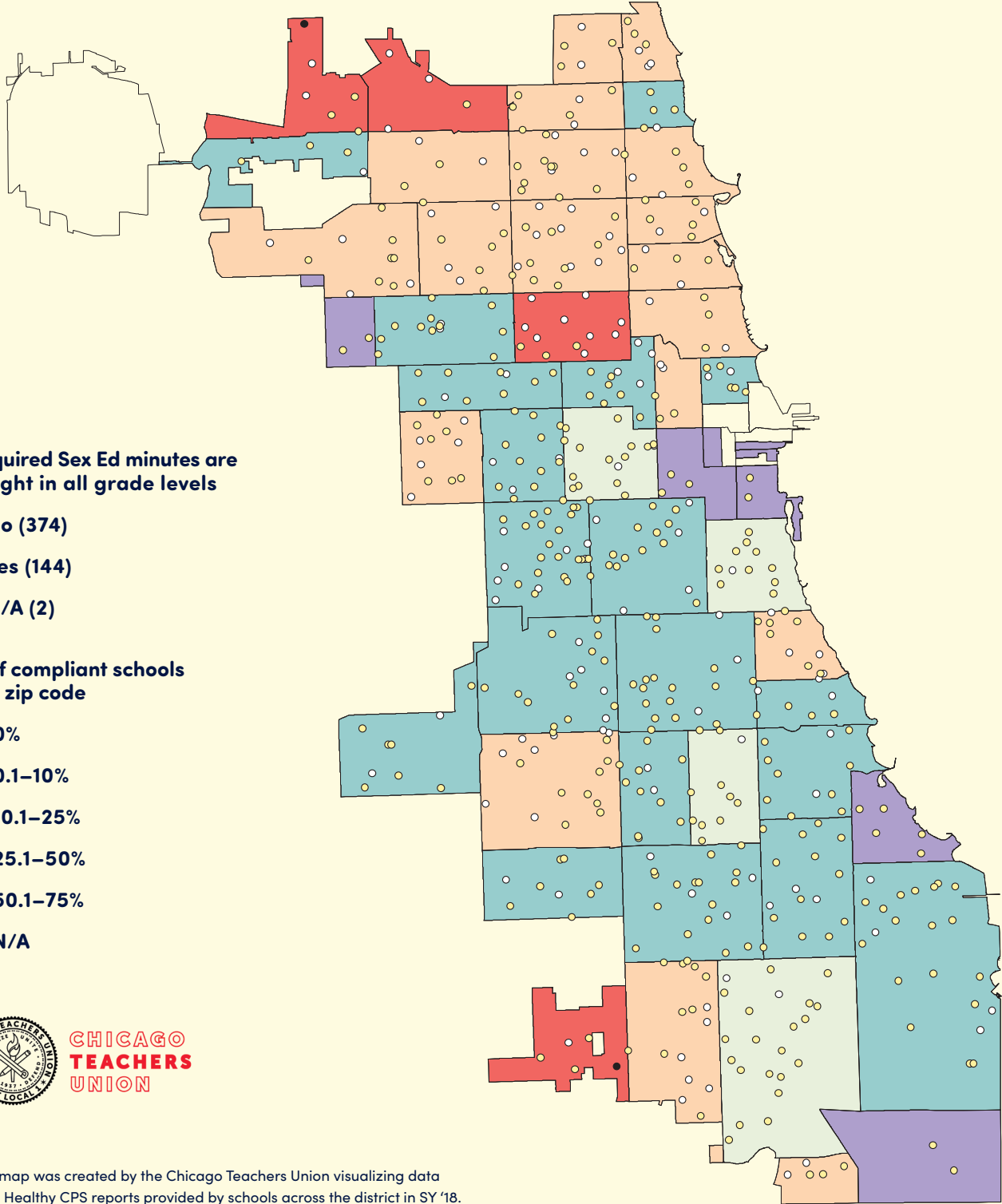
9. OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 14.

10. OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 6. See the trainings available at:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UHD2f\\_Sky5zlkpKMRX0bvdgeMH-Qx1L5](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UHD2f_Sky5zlkpKMRX0bvdgeMH-Qx1L5)

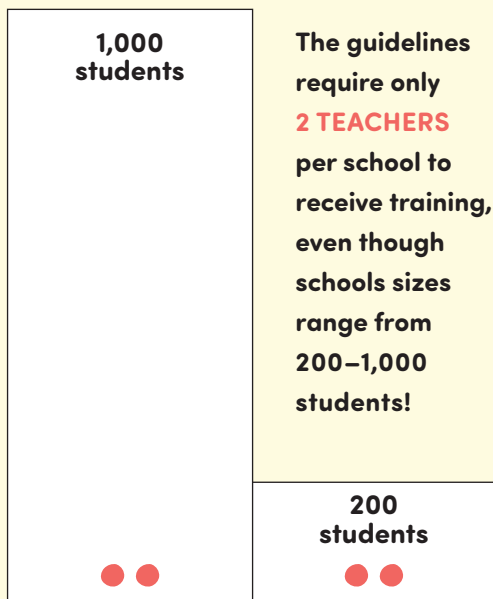
11. OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 8.

# CPS Sex Education Policy Compliance by School and Zip Code Totals, SY 2018



This map was created by the Chicago Teachers Union visualizing data from Healthy CPS reports provided by schools across the district in SY '18.

## Sexual Health Education (SHE) is Falling Short



The training is only **3 HOURS** and once teachers complete it, they do not have to do any more training for **4 YEARS**.



## Are caregivers involved?

Currently, caregivers do not receive tools or support to guide the youth in their communities.<sup>12</sup> CPS requires schools to notify parents of the curriculum and give the opportunity to opt-out their children from the classes.<sup>13</sup> The implementation guidelines also specify that schools should host an open house each year for parents and provide resources, such as FACE videos and suggested readings.

These standards provide the bare minimum of what should be happening to support caregivers who often didn't receive this education themselves.<sup>14</sup>

## Caregivers almost never receive information about how to engage youth in these important conversations.

While some materials like the copy of the “scope and sequence” are available online, they are difficult to access for caregivers who may not have access to a computer or require additional tech support. Some key documents like the CPS curriculum are only available if you visit the school and are not translated into different languages. When CPS has provided workshops around sexual health education, caregivers have noted a number of concerns with how these workshops are implemented including language and technology barriers, and the limited breadth of the topics covered.<sup>15</sup>

As it stands, implementation of the existing sexual health education policy varies from school to school, and depends on the enthusiasm of the principals or other advocates within the school, as well as teachers who take sexual health education seriously, and the community of caregivers motivated to support the students and hold the school system accountable for the resources needed to fully implement the policy.

12. 2020 SHE Policy at 2.

13. 2020 SHE Policy at 2.

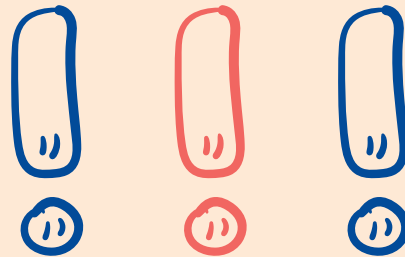
14. OSHW Implementation Guidelines at 4.

15. Based on feedback from HTA survivor-leaders after attending several CPS FACE workshops in 2021.

Comprehensive sexual health education can prevent gender-based violence for the next generation.

**1 in 3**

adolescents experiences sexual violence at work

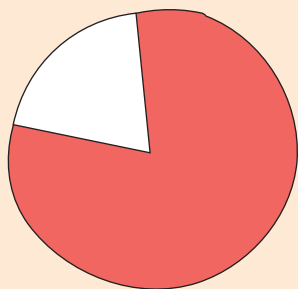


**40–60% of Black Women**

experience sexual abuse before the age of 18

**44% of Latinx Women**

under 25 know a survivor of domestic violence

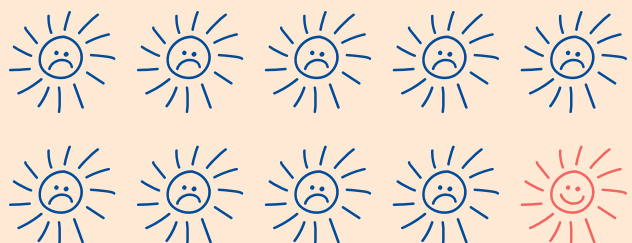


**Over 80%**

of girls in grades 8–11 report sexual harassment

**9 out of 10 LGBTQ+**

students reported being harassed in the previous year



# The SexEd Works Campaign

As survivors, we want to ensure that the next generation has a chance of reducing gender-based violence. For that to happen, our children and the youth in our community must have access to high-quality, medically accurate, sexual health education from kindergarten all the way through high school. Here's what needs to happen in order to make this possible:



## 1. Funding

CPS's comprehensive sexual education policy is an unfunded mandate, making it impossible to schools to provide the resources to educators to teach high-quality sexual health education.

### Funding the policy is necessary to ensure:

- School staff receive high quality, ongoing training that includes information on diverse learners and is culturally specific
- Outside consultants can support the implementation of the curriculum and staff training
- Caregivers receive meaningful training and support to engage youth in conversations about sexual health

**A total of \$8.3 million is needed to ensure high-quality sexual health education is available to all CPS youth:**

### **\$1.6–3.2 MILLION**

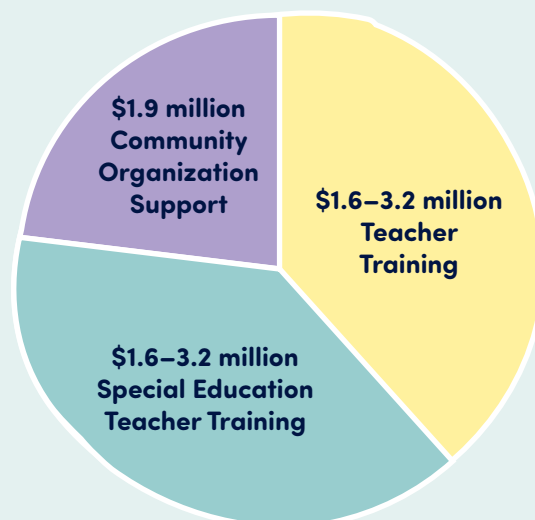
Annually, provide two teachers a total of 1-2 weeks of training that includes observational training

### **\$1.6–3.2 MILLION**

Provide 1-2 weeks of training/education for all special education teachers

### **\$1.9 MILLION**

Grant each school \$3,000 to hire a community-based organizations to support the implementation of comprehensive sexual education





## Funding has the potential to correct significant flaws in the curriculum. For instance, funding could:

- **Include specific resources for special education students**, including more visuals, interactive visuals, links in each lesson to related content in younger grades (ie: in an 8th grade anatomy lesson include links to 4th grade visuals as well), and more time for dialogue about the social aspects of sexual health.<sup>16</sup>
- **Support training educators in the social-emotional aspects of sexual health** from how to approach the array of body image issues young people experience, to identity-based issues around sex assignment at birth, gender, gender expression, and sexuality.
- **Supporting educators and community members to understand gender-based violence.** Specifically, teaching the cycle of violence, warning signs of violence in teen dating relationships and family relationships. Educators and community members also need to understand the kinds of support that survivors of gender-based violence need and what local, Chicago-based resources exist for survivors.

**At the local level, principals can already allocate resources towards training and support for community-based organizations through the use of their discretionary funds. While school budgets vary, at a minimum, principals can allocate anywhere from \$3–5,000 a year towards providing staff a few days of training and inviting a community-based organization to support the implementation of the policy.**

<sup>16</sup>. They have suggested *Whole Selves*, a sexual health education curriculum which focuses on young people with disabilities, as a resource CPS can look to for more guidance.



## 2. Accountability

Community members must be able to hold schools and CPS accountable for the quality and equitable implementation of comprehensive sex education. Below is a list of recommendations to create a community-based mechanism of accountability:

- The Office of Student Health and Wellness collects information from principals about their implementation plans and reports out how each school performed in accordance with the policy and the plan in place.
- The curriculum is publicly available to caregivers and translated in multiple languages for accessibility
- LSCs are all informed of this mandatory policy and trained on how to best implement comprehensive sexual education
- With the support of community-based organizations, CPS provides a mandatory orientation/workshop for all CPS principals on how to develop a plan to implement comprehensive sexual education in their school
- Principals are required to submit their implementation plan to their Local School Council at the beginning of each school year for each grade level
- Principals are required to provide all parents/caregivers the implementation plan at the beginning of the school year & post them publicly on the school's website; and
- LSCs and the Office of Student Health and Wellness engage in quarterly check-ins for principals to assess the implementation of their plans and offer continued training/support.



### 3. Caregivers are Key

While the CPS sexual health curriculum relies on caregivers to be the primary source of support for students, many caregivers never received high-quality, comprehensive sexual health education themselves. Caregivers need tools to handle difficult but critical conversations with youth. CPS should work to provide the following for caregivers<sup>17</sup>:

#### **AN ANNUAL ORIENTATION**

Consistent implementation across schools of an orientation to the sexual health education curriculum at the beginning of each school year.



#### **Online caregiver support should include:**

- A copy of CPS' policy**
- Implementation guidelines**
- Scope and Sequence guidance**
- Copy of the sexual health curriculum**
- Book lists and websites**
- Upcoming dates for caregiver workshops**
- Name(s) of the educators teaching sexual health education**
- Recordings of previous workshops**
- An email listserve for parents to ask questions and receive answers on sexual health education in their school**

#### **ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS ONLINE**

Each school should have a section of their website and on their social media pages dedicated to sexual health education with resources, links and tools for youth and caregivers. Links should include CPS' policy, implementation guidelines, the scope and sequence guidance, the curriculum, parent resources, book lists and websites, upcoming parent/caregiver workshop dates, recordings of previous workshops, and email lists caregivers can sign up for. Multilingual translation of all documents should be provided.

#### **OFFER A ROBUST SERIES OF WORKSHOPS FOR CAREGIVERS EACH YEAR**

The workshop series should:

1. Focus on tools for opening and having conversations about sexual health with youth, with a focus on supporting conversations between caregivers and youth with disabilities
2. Be advertised broadly, targeting parents through culturally-relevant communication strategies
3. Be accessible for languages in the specific community and accessible for people with disabilities
4. Happen during hours when caregivers can attend
5. Focus on topics where caregivers have noted they need more tools: resources regarding gender-based violence and support for survivors; consent, puberty, gender and sexuality, STI treatment and prevention, pregnancy prevention, pleasure and masturbation, and menstruation

#### **MAKING SHE RESOURCES PART OF PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Caregivers have this point of contact with teachers that can be used to start conversations, provide resources, and answer questions, and lead to follow-up sessions after caregivers have reviewed the materials.

17. 2021 Feedback to OSHW on Implementation Guidelines: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/133jRwOpKdz7RSOXj\\_vtyNSbcB-ogca3zq5cxjVSs3XM/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/133jRwOpKdz7RSOXj_vtyNSbcB-ogca3zq5cxjVSs3XM/edit;);

# Our Progress

Since 2019, the SexEd Works campaign has engaged over 400 caregivers, youth, and educators to fight for Black and brown communities to have access to life-saving sexual health education. Led by a coalition of youth, caregivers, and educators, SexEd Works has shaped the perception of sexual health education as a critical intervention tool to prevent gender-based violence.

Together, we have advocated for the recommendations in this report to members of the CPS School Board, to the Office of Student Health and Wellness, and the City of Chicago Mayor's Office with limited success. The new implementation guidelines adopted only one of our recommendations around providing an orientation for caregivers around sexual health. The OSHW also initiated providing sexual health workshops for caregivers but they are not accessible to parents across the district, and do not provide the information we have asked for.

## What is next

In summer of 2020, SexEd Works met with members of the CPS board and the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness (OSHW) to share their concerns about the current status of sexual health education and recommend the above-mentioned changes to the policy and practices.

At the time, we learned OSHW was developing a new sexual health education policy to replace the one from 2013. That fall, HTA survivors with the SexEd Works campaign organized over 200 educators, youth and caregivers to provide public comment to CPS that advocated for changes to the sexual health policy in alignment with our vision. However, in December of 2020, CPS adopted the new policy without implementing any of our recommendations. In some cases, the policy seemed to be worse than what our community had asked for.

Since 2020, there is even less transparency as to the accessibility youth had to comprehensive sexual education. CPS is no longer collecting data on

whether schools have complied with the sexual health policy. The pandemic has also made it clear to us as survivors from communities of color, living on Chicago's South and West sides, that the institution was never meant for us and will never be for us.

Survivor leaders in the campaign also moved decision-makers to adopt this position. In 2021, the City of Chicago Mayor's Office listened to survivor leaders and included sexual health education as a strategic priority in preventing gender-based violence, allocating approximately \$3.8M towards prevention efforts like this. It is still not clear when or how these funds will be distributed. This realization has only deepened our resolve to ensure that we give power back to our communities, and make comprehensive sexual health education accessible. In sharing the inner workings and our vision, we hope that you as youth, caregiver, LSC member, principal, or educator can start to work towards these changes in your respective communities.

# Take Action

Below is a list of action steps you can do to work towards ensuring you and your children or the youth in your community, have access to high-quality, comprehensive sexual health education.

1

Find out what your schools' Healthy CPS Report says about your implementation of comprehensive sexual health education

2

Ask your principal what the plans are to implement comprehensive sexual health education this school year

3

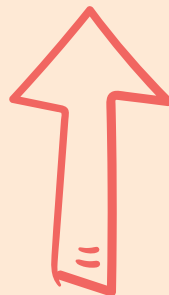
Talk with the members of your Local School Council about the mandatory policy and share the recommendations of this toolkit

4

Write a letter to the Chicago Public Schools Board seeking more funding for comprehensive sexual health education

5

Join the SexEd Works campaign



6

Attend a "train-the-trainer" training for the SexEd Works Caregiver Workshop series