



2016 NCSH Annual Meeting Summary

Welcome and Opening Remarks: In her opening remarks, Deb Hauser, President of Advocates for Youth, highlighted many advances in the field of sexual health over the past five years, including a significant decline in teen pregnancy, medical advances (such as PEP and PrEP), the Affordable Care Act, and legalization of same-sex marriage. She also noted ongoing challenges, such as homophobia and transphobia, limited access to honest sex education and confidential health services for teens, and promoting contraceptives in a balanced, culturally appropriate manner. Deb also highlighted many of the coalition's accomplishments since its inception.

Then, Dr. Gail Bolan, Director of CDC's Division of STD Prevention, thanked members for attending and for their ongoing dedication to the coalition. She noted the coalition's accomplishments and encouraged members to continue collaborating to tackle the work that remains, and stated that CDC will continue to fund the coalition for at least another year.

Promoting Healthy Masculinity, Engaging Boys and Men, Improving Sexual Health: This two-part panel was designed to increase understanding of prevailing male gender norms and how those norms affect men, women, and society, including sexual health and healthcare-seeking behavior; and to offer practical solutions to help promote healthy masculinity.

Deborah Arrindell, Vice President, Health Policy at the American Sexual Health Association, moderated this panel. The speakers were Amber Madison, author and sexuality educator; Magaly Marques, Deputy Director, U.S. Programs at Promundo; Dr. Arik Marcell, Associate Professor at Johns Hopkins University; and Dr. Amy Schalet, Associate Professor at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Part I: Understanding the Issue - Amber Madison opened the panel with an overview of prevailing gender norms by featuring words that are typically associated with men and women. She described what it means "to be a man" in today's dominant culture, how these standards are communicated and reinforced, their negative consequences, and the possibility for change, particularly if we look at norms internationally.

Next, Magaly Marques shared Promundo's work to engage boys and men, and the research it conducts to understand masculinities and their association with sexual health behaviors, violence, and caregiving. This research has found that acceptance of, and compliance with, prevailing masculine social norms is consistently correlated with HIV risk behaviors, while men who accept gender equality are healthier, as are their female partners.

Then, Arik Marcell presented on how masculinity beliefs affect men's and boys' utilization of health care. He shared influences on males' use of sexual and reproductive health care using the socio-ecologic framework from both the male and provider perspective, and highlighted results from focus groups held with adolescent males in Baltimore.

Lastly, Amber Madison presented her research with 1,000 heterosexual men that found that although many men do not embrace traditional standards of masculinity, they still feel pressure from both men and women to be "guys."

Part II: Practical Solutions - Amy Schalet opened the second half of the panel with practical solutions for parents and providers to help boys develop healthy relationships and understand that wanting love and intimacy is normal. Arik Marcell then presented options for transforming male gender norms in the healthcare setting and shared work that has been done in Baltimore and at the federal level that explicitly address males and encourage their participation in health care. Next, Magaly Marques shared Promundo's perspectives on what is needed to shift male gender norms and provided an overview of their international MenCare campaign. Lastly, Amber Madison shared tips for better communicating with men through the media.

NCSH Year in Review: NCSH Co-Director Alyson Kristensen presented the Health Care Action Group's (HCAG) recent activities. The HCAG has nearly completed "Sexual Health and Your Patients: A Provider's Guide" and has developed a plan for promotion and dissemination. The HCAG also translated "Take Charge of Your Sexual Health: What you need to know about preventive services" into Spanish and held focus groups with Spanish language dominant adults in June to ensure the guide's relevance and clarity. The HCAG is now collaborating with the Communications Action Group to plan for a national media campaign to promote the guide.

Next, Co-Director Susan Gilbert gave an overview of the Communications Action Group's (CAG) activities. Susan highlighted the CAG's success with the media and that the NCSH is now a "go to" media source. Over the past three years, NCSH has placed 223 stories, generating up to 312 million audience impressions. The CAG has also entered into content partnerships with Refinery29 and YourTango which the NCSH to develop and place original stories. The CAG is continuing its work on the Action Steps Initiative in which content is being developed to motivate and equip members of the public to protect their sexual health. And lastly, the CAG's Media Standards and Practices subcommittee continues to advocate for technology platforms to revise their policies that restrict sexual health information.

Alyson then closed the presentation with an update of the NCSH's ongoing communications and its plans for sustainability and fundraising.

Action Group Work Sessions: The CAG and HCAG met for 1.5 hours to work on current initiatives and discuss priorities and goals for the coming year.

- The HCAG continued to plan for promoting and disseminating the new guide for providers with participants recommending additional organizations to reach out to and offering up contacts within those organizations. The group also provided feedback to improve a promotional postcard. In the second half of the session, the HCAG reviewed its progress toward its goals and discussed whether its remaining third goal still makes sense or if the group wants to propose a different goal. Session participants discussed a number of areas the HCAG could begin to address in the next year.
- The CAG started by reviewing its goals and priorities, and the progress it has made toward those goals and the activities planned for the next year. The group supported the original goals and suggested some ideas for future activities, including tapping new communications channels (e.g., bloggers, dating sites) and providing additional guidance to help members incorporate NCSH messages and materials. Session participants also brainstormed ideas for launching the Action Steps campaign to attract significant attention. Next, the group discussed ways to maximize the CAG's media relations and content partnerships to continue to use these channels to push out messages. Lastly, the CAG discussed initial next steps for the Media Standards and Practices subcommittee.

The Future of the NCSH: In the final session, participants broke up into five small groups for a brainstorming discussion. The purpose of this session was to “take the pulse” of members on potential future directions for the NCSH. Wendy Child, a professional focus group moderator, led the session. Each group was tasked with answering the question “What unique and valuable role(s) can the NCSH play to promote and improve sexual health?” along with supporting questions around future trends/topics, audiences, and types of activities. The groups met for 30 minutes and then gave a two-minute report-back to share their ideas, which will be synthesized and shared with the Steering Committee and the NCSH members.

Closing Remarks: Alice Gandelman, Director of the California STD/HIV Prevention Training Center, summed up the day in her closing remarks and thanked everyone for coming to another successful NCSH meeting.