



Our Vision

The Coalition envisions a nation where people feel comfortable talking about sexual health and have access to the information and services needed to support healthy and respectful choices, without facing stigma or discrimination.

The Need

By nearly every measure, the state of sexual health in the United States is poor.

The numbers tell the story – each year there are an estimated 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)ⁱ, 3.2 million unintended pregnanciesⁱⁱ, 48,100 new cases of HIVⁱⁱⁱ, and 38,000 new cases of Hepatitis B^{iv}. Half of all sexually active people contract human papilloma virus (HPV) during their lifetime^v, and one in six (aged 14-49) have genital herpes^{vi}. More than one in three women and one in four men have experienced intimate partner violence, including rape, physical violence, and/or stalking.^{vii} Poor sexual health also exacts a large financial burden: the annual medical cost of STIs, including HIV, is estimated to be \$16.9 billion^{viii}, while teen childbearing cost U.S. taxpayers \$10.9 billion in 2008^x.

Why is this the case? Traditional approaches to sexual health are often disease-oriented and negative in tone, usually focusing on one disease at a time, while emphasizing “right or wrong” behaviors, risks, and dysfunction. Talking about sexuality and sexual health remains uncomfortable for many Americans, including adults of all ages, parents, teens, and healthcare providers. Yet, 75% of adults want to learn more about sexual health and 40% want advice on how to talk to their partners^x.

Many patients also want their doctors to engage in more direct and honest conversations with them about sexual health. At the same time, patients often lack access to appropriate sexual health care services including sexual history taking, immunizations, screening, counseling, treatment, and referrals. The delivery of these services too often lags behind the delivery of other preventive services that patients need to stay healthy.

A positive, health promotion framework that addresses the key factors influencing sexual behavior is needed – one that equips individuals to talk openly and effectively about sexual health and sexuality, to build positive and respectful relationships, and to access appropriate, high quality sexual health care services across the lifespan. These are the cornerstones of a sexual health approach.

Why A New Coalition? Our Mission and Approach

Mission: *The National Coalition for Sexual Health aims to improve sexual health and well-being by encouraging productive and sustained conversations about sexual health and promoting high quality sexual health information and health services.*

The Coalition will help start conversations about sexual health and prompt action in our lives, health care settings, and communities. We will bring together organizations and individuals who have a stake in not just advancing sexual health, but in advancing the overall health of our nation. Health care providers, consumer and advocacy groups, health organizations, businesses, media, faith-based organizations, educators, and the public health community will be invited to participate and to engage in joint action.

We aim to make sexual health a common part of our national discourse and promote a broad portfolio of sexual health care services. As a coalition, we will define the key components of a sexual health strategy, develop messages and action steps for consumers and providers, promote sexual health across the lifespan, improve our nation's sexual health literacy, and encourage other organizations to make sexual health one of their priorities.

We will also provide a unique opportunity for organizations, particularly those that are focused on specific health issues or target populations, to come together under a broader sexual health framework to improve our nation's health.

Our Goals

Members of the Coalition will work together to achieve the following goals:

- Promote awareness and acceptance of sexual health as a core element of overall health and well-being across the lifespan.
- Encourage and normalize open dialogue about sexual health between partners, parents and children, healthcare providers and patients, and within communities.
- Empower individuals to protect and enhance their own personal sexual health and well-being, while respecting the health and decisions of others.
- Encourage a wide variety of organizations to embrace positive and effective approaches to sexual health and well-being, based on the best available science.
- Encourage and enable health care providers and patients to have conversations about sexual health and to utilize evidence-based sexual health services.

Our Shared Values

We believe that sexual health includes awareness of human sexuality; the ability to enjoy intimate relationships that are fulfilling; respecting the rights and choices of others; knowledge of and access to high quality sexual health services throughout life; and understanding the family, community, and societal factors that influence sexual health.

Members of the National Coalition for Sexual Health believe that:

- Sexual health is a core element of our overall health and well-being.
- Sexuality is a natural and positive part of our lives, and individuals' decisions about how to express their sexuality should be respected.
- Americans should have access to accurate and complete information about sexual health, which is based on the best available science.
- The needs of various populations—which may differ by age, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, education and income levels, personal values, and emotional and physical development—should be recognized and addressed in our work.

Who We Are

Established in 2012, the NCSH is managed by Altarum Institute in conjunction with the Coalition Steering Committee, consisting of the Center of Excellence for Sexual Health at Morehouse School of Medicine, National Association of Community Health Centers, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, Project Inform, and Communications Consultant Tom Beall.

Altarum Institute takes the lead on Coalition projects and activities. Altarum seeks the advice and active involvement of Coalition members, while respecting their available time and resources. Initial support for the Coalition is provided through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Benefits to Joining the Coalition

- Develop strong ties with new organizations and engage in joint action to identify and address current and emerging needs in the field of sexual health.
- Participate in the development of a sexual health strategy which defines the key components of a sexual health approach at the individual, community, and societal levels that can be utilized by Coalition members and others working to improve sexual health.
- Learn more about sexual health as we work together to develop compelling messages and tools and disseminate cutting-edge research and evidence-based strategies.
- Promote your own work through the Coalition’s annual conference, website, and other communication channels.
- Amplify unified messages about the health benefits of open and honest conversations about sexuality and sexual health.

Joining the Coalition

The Steering Committee will extend invitations to organizations and individuals to participate in the Coalition. All members must endorse the mission, goals and values of the Coalition. For more information, please see the “Charter: National Coalition for Sexual Health,” which describes time commitment, action groups, policies, and procedures. If you are interested in joining the Coalition or would like more information, *please contact: Altarum Institute, ncsh@altarum.org, 202-741-1535, or www.nationalcoalitionforsexualhealth.org.*

ⁱ CDC. STD Trends in the United States: 2010 National Data for Gonorrhea, Chlamydia and Syphilis, November 17, 2011.

ⁱⁱ Guttmacher Institute. Facts on Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, January 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ CDC. HIV in the United States: An Overview, March 14, 2012.

^{iv} CDC. Hepatitis B Information for Health Professionals, January 31, 2012.

^v CDC. Genital HPV Infection – CDC Fact Sheet, August 9, 2012.

^{vi} CDC. Genital Herpes – CDC Fact Sheet, September 19, 2012.

^{vii} CDC. National Intimate Partners and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), 2010.

^{viii} Chesson HW et al. A brief review of the estimated economic burden of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States: inflation-adjusted updates of previously published cost studies. *Sex Transm Dis.* 2011 Oct; 38(10):889-91.

^{ix} The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Counting it up: The public cost of teen childbearing: key data. June 2011.

^x Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. National Survey of Adolescents and Young Adults: Sexual Health Knowledge, Attitudes and Experiences, 2003.