



Preventative Health STI Round Table - Submission

Youth Affairs Council of WA

Contributors: Youth Educating Peers (YEP) Project (youth peer sexual health) and All It Takes Project (youth peer family & intimate partner violence primary prevention), delivered by the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA).

Target population: Young People aged 12-25 across metropolitan and regional WA

Context: Young people in WA are disproportionately affected by the burden of STIs and BBVs (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/infectious-diseases>) and identified as a priority population by the [Fourth National](#), and [Western Australian Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategies](#). In addition to this, there is a current [national epidemic of family and intimate partner violence](#) (FIPV) which is strongly correlated with the prevalence of STIs.

Sexual Health as Holistic:

Sexual health needs to be viewed, taught and addressed holistically. STI & BBV prevention initiatives are more impactful when information is shared as part of comprehensive relationship and sexual health education, including healthy relationships, consent, human rights, pornography and identifying drivers of FIPV such as gender inequality, coercive control & harmful misogynistic online rhetoric.

When STI and BBV information is integrated across education and health promotion, shame and stigma can be reduced, leading to higher rates of testing. Holistic education includes building healthy relationship skills to encourage STI testing as an important part of a sexual relationship, building language and vocabulary around talking to a partner about STIs and making sexual health a "non-negotiable." STI prevention does not exist in a silo and therefore should not be treated as such.

"There is an ongoing need for a coordinated, national focus on youth sexual health that supports young people to assert their needs, wants and boundaries in sexual relationships and builds a culture of respect and equality in youth sexual cultures." (La Trobe, 2025)

Family & Intimate Partner Violence (FIPV) Considerations:

FIPV victim-survivors are an important population to consider when planning STI prevention strategies. Young Australian's exposed to FIPV during childhood are at 49% higher risk of hospitalisation for an STI versus non-exposed young people (<https://srh.bmj.com/content/49/4/245>).

STIs have higher prevalence in victim-survivors of FIPV as a population (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877575625000382>) and additionally, are exposed to higher STI-risk activities (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3856434/>). Therefore, it is useful for FIPV considerations to be included in STI prevention strategies. This could include discreet, trauma & FIPV-informed STI screening and treatment services as well as continued funding of primary prevention peer education programs for young people, such as the All It Takes and YEP Projects.

Media Strategies:

Social Media

[The Generation Survey 2024](#) states “Almost all young people (98%) regularly use at least one social media platform.” Whilst the ‘Under 16 social media ban/delay policy’ has come into effect, social media still plays an important role in reaching a wide audience of young people. Although the state government has created resources for young people, such as the ‘Get the Facts’ website, social media content is a lower threshold medium of sharing educational content, as it appears organically instead of having to be sought out. It may be beneficial for the DoH to create social media pages similar to [Queensland Health](#), as they are attention grabbing, shareable, relevant, humorous & encourages engagement.

Collaborations with influential online creators for sharing sexual health awareness could be an effective prevention strategy. Ensuring the influencer’s brand aligns with key messaging, that the messaging is consistent and ongoing, and is genuine in its communication is important for effective engagement with young people.

Using legislation and policy to ensure accountability for social media companies can reduce content that promotes misinformation, disinformation or harmful rhetoric and would be part of a comprehensive approach to sexual health education. In addition, working with social media companies to advocate for sexual health information not to be censored or shadow banned would be highly beneficial. This is a challenge the YEP Project face in disseminating their online content. [Teach Us Consent](#) is currently advocating for an algorithm opt-in feature to be implemented on all social media accounts due to the concerning rates of harmful radicalisation & misogynistic messaging which we know is reaching and shaping the attitudes of young people. Acknowledging the harmful intersection between online messaging, FIPV and sexual health would be a strategy for supporting increased wellbeing for young people in WA.

Other Media

Promoting sexual health campaigns through dating apps would target populations of young people who are possibly engaging in casual sex or risky sexual behaviours. Altering the promotional content to target specific demographics would be important.

The introduction of the ‘Under 16 social media ban/delay policy’, requires alternative avenues for health promotion, such as podcast ads, physical advertisements and promotion through schools.

Comprehensive Online Testing Services

To reduce barriers for STI and BBV testing, developing a free comprehensive online testing service would be of benefit. WA has free online testing for chlamydia and gonorrhoea via the 'Get the Facts' program service which generates a referral for swab collection. However, there are international examples of online STI clinics that offer full panel testing. For example, [Sexual Health London's](#) free service enables online home STI testing, in addition to a regular and emergency contraception service. This NHS service also includes an FIPV risk assessment and can link people with FIPV resources.

Thank you for considering this submission. Please contact Claudia Bedford (Sexuality, FIPV & Other Project Coordinator) at claudia@yacwa.org.au for further information.