



# How to Host a Successful RSE Information Session for Parents and Families

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) should be provided in partnership between parents and families and schools. Parent and family RSE information sessions give schools the opportunity to share with families the content that will be covered in RSE as part of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum.

This information sheet is **not** prescriptive - it is intended as a guide by offering suggestions and considerations for school staff. Schools should always consider their own ways-of-working, and what would work best for their students, staff and families.

Any questions about this resource, please contact the Schools Senior Policy Officer ([gdmr@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:gdmr@health.wa.gov.au)).

## **Who should be involved in the planning or facilitating of the session?**

Leadership, health and physical education teachers, school nurse, and student services staff should all be part of the planning for a parent and family information session/s.

## **What about students?**

Student involvement should be considered. Student/s can talk about what they would like to learn about during RSE lessons or previous positive experiences in RSE lessons. If the parent information session is scheduled for the end of the school year, students can present what they learnt across the year.

## **What about parents/carers/families?**

Having a families provide feedback and guidance on the information session can be a useful "litmus test".

## **What about an external service?**

It can be beneficial to have an external service present at the parent information session **if** the external service is presenting all or part of your RSE program. They can discuss or demonstrate the activities and information they will cover.

An external sexual health service can also be useful as an expert source of information. They can help answer sexual health-related questions school staff may not be equipped to answer and help dispel misinformation.

**NB: If you are using an external service, they should be briefed on content to cover, expectations, and align with the school's values and ways of working.**





### **What is your goal for hosting a parent and family RSE information session?**

- What would the school like to achieve?
- What would the teachers/school staff like to achieve?
- What would you like families/carers to leave with?
- How will it benefit the students?
- What do you want the school community to get out of it?

These are all questions you should consider when planning the information session. They can help shape the development of the information session. If it is about informing the parents about the RSE content covered - then the session should have a heavy focus on content.

Is it about fostering stronger relationships between the school and families – then how can you do that?

Is it about preparing families regarding the content that will be covered so they can have conversations at home – then how will you support/educate families?

### **Will you host a school-wide parent information session? Or will you host different information sessions by year level or groups?**

Hosting one session for the entire school may be more efficient for both school staff and families. However, running a session for a large group (particularly if you are a K-12 school) can result in year-level information being covered too quickly, without the depth needed for families to fully engage and understand.

You could run concurrent sessions for year levels on the same evening, but this is difficult for families who have multiple children enrolled in the school, as they likely can only attend one session.

Hosting separate sessions for each year level enables schools to provide more detailed information and gives families the flexibility to attend multiple sessions. However, this approach can be more time-consuming for staff and challenging for families to manage due to scheduling demands.

### **What should be covered?**

- The current WA HPE curriculum.
- An overview of the school's HPE/RSE program and/or lesson plans.
- Data and statistics from the latest [National Survey of Secondary Students and Sexual Health](#)
- Any school policies that relate to RSE.
- Any feedback from previous RSE lessons/programs delivered at the school.
- Presentations or overviews of any external organisations who will be attending the school to present at RSE-related content.
- Any purchased resources or programs which are being delivered as part of lesson plans.
- Information for parents and families on how they can support their young people to have safe, healthy relationships.



## In-person vs Online vs Hybrid model

There are various ways to host an information session, each offering benefits and factors for a school to consider.

Format	Benefits	Considerations
<b>In-person</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can easily demonstrate the planned activities with families.</li><li>• Builds a better relationship between the school and families.</li><li>• Provide physical resources on the session.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be difficult to manage large number of attendees.</li><li>• Attending in-person is not convenient for a lot of families.</li></ul>
<b>Online</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be more accessible for families to attend from home.</li><li>• Can be recorded and distributed to families who could not attend.</li><li>• Often easier to manage large number of attendees.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Challenging to demonstrate activities, as you will need to modify them for an online format.</li><li>• Less personal.</li><li>• Any IT issues can stall or prevent the session from occurring.</li><li>• Families who have limited IT cannot participate.</li></ul>
<b>Hybrid (both in-person and online)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most accessible option for families.</li><li>• Can be recorded and distributed to families who could not attend.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significantly more planning and staff time, as you need to consider how to best accommodate both parties and need dedicated staff to monitor and accommodate people online.</li><li>• Difficult to demonstrate activities effectively.</li></ul>

## Recommended resources and other documents to have available.

[Talk Soon Talk Often](#) booklet

[Yarning Quiet Ways](#) booklet

[Puberty](#) booklet

[Relationships, Sex and Other Stuff](#) booklet

Copies of the [WA health and physical education curriculum](#)

Overview of the schools RSE program with planned dates on when certain topics will be discussed in class

Any books or other resources in the library related to RSE

Any resources/games used as part of the school's RSE program.

The latest [National Secondary School Survey on Sexual Health](#)



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## What format/s would you like to utilise?

Below is a list of formats, with benefits and consideration. You may combine or use a range of formats for your information session.

Format	Benefits	Considerations
<b>Presentations</b>		
<b>Parent/Family presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helps bring a unique voice and context.</li><li>• Helps bring parents and families on side as they likely have similar experiences or questions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need to ensure the presenter/s feel supported.</li><li>• Ensure there is no personal stories shared or personal questions asked.</li><li>• Consider who should answer any questions from attending families - the student, a teacher, school leadership?</li></ul>
<b>Teacher/School staff presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can easily ensure the information provide aligns with what the school's RSE program.</li><li>• Helps build rapport between staff and families.</li><li>• School staff can easily answer questions related to the RSE program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Too many teacher presentations can be seen as too "top-down".</li></ul>
<b>Student presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helps bring a unique voice and context.</li><li>• Helps build students experience and confidence.</li><li>• Helps ensures student's voices shape the schools RSE program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need to ensure the students feel confident to speak.</li><li>• Ensure there is no personal stories shared or personal questions asked.</li><li>• Consider who should answer any questions from attending families - the student, a teacher, school leadership?</li></ul>

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Format	Benefits	Considerations
<b>Demonstrations</b>		
<b>Lesson/activity demonstration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can show parents what will be taught and how it links to the curriculum.</li> <li>Can be used as an opportunity for feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you show a range of activities across the year levels to families?</li> <li>Do you try and separate families by year level?</li> <li>If so, what if a family has students across different year levels.</li> </ul>
<b>External organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can show parents what will be taught and how.</li> <li>Helps build trust between the external organisation, the school, and families.</li> <li>Can be used as an opportunity for feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to the school on appropriateness of external organisation.</li> <li>to the external organisation on planned content.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External organisations need to be considered carefully to ensure they align with the curriculum, lesson activities and school's values.</li> </ul>
<b>Answers questions and discussions</b>		
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for open dialogue between families and the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questions can be submitted anonymously, prior to the information session through websites or through registration, allowing schools to prepare answers.</li> <li>Need to ensure whoever is answering the questions is confident to answer any curly questions or dispel information.</li> </ul>
<b>Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can have a range of voices (school staff, leadership, student, parent, external organisation) answering questions about RSE and the school's approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel members need to be considered carefully (particularly if they are a family/student/external organisation).</li> <li>Will there be questions from the audience, and if so, what is the plan if there are inappropriate questions?</li> </ul>

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## Are you anticipating opposition to your RSE program, and if so, what about?

A majority of parents and families are supportive of comprehensive, age appropriate RSE being taught to their children.<sup>1</sup> Often, opposition comes about because parents and families are not aware of what is taught to their child so running an information session like this is a great first step.

Some common myths regarding RSE are:

Potential issue	Tips to address this
Children are too young to learn about X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have the curriculum available to show and reference how a certain topic/lesson is age appropriate.</li><li>• Have the National Secondary School Survey.</li></ul>
RSE encourages young people to have sex at a younger age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence shows that participation in RSE does not encourage young people to have sex earlier, in fact, evidence suggests it encourages young people to have sex later.</li></ul>
RSE does not align with the culture or religion of a family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consult with local cultural/religious leaders/organisations regarding RSE.</li><li>• Highlight that RSE is focused on building happy, knowledgeable young people who can have respectful relationships free from coercion.</li></ul>

Adapted from [International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education 2018](#)

## Would you like to gather feedback from families to help shape the RSE program?

Hosting a RSE information session can be a good way to get families involved to give feedback on your school's RSE program. If you are requesting feedback from families, be clear about expectations and what they are feeding back on.

For example: Families **cannot** give feedback requesting a topic/lesson is removed if it is in the curriculum. Families **can** request to add a topic for a year level they feel is important for their young person to learn about, and the school will consider it.

If feedback is collected, it is important outcomes are relayed back to families.

## What to do following an information session?

The school should communicate feedback back to the parents.

Don't let the conversation stop there. If the RSE lessons are starting later in the year, send communication to the families reminding them what will be covered for their child/children's RSE lessons and with planned dates.

See the GDHR website with sample parent letters for [primary](#) and [secondary](#).

If you host an information session at the beginning of the year, you may want to host a second one at the end of the year or present at a P&C meeting on the success and learnings of this year's RSE program and how it may change for future years.

<sup>1</sup> Hendriks, J., Glasgow-Collins, R., Saltis, H., Marson, K., Walsh, J., Lawton, T., & Burns, S. (2022). Parents and their support for school-based relationships and sexuality education: Western Australia snapshot report. Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health, Curtin University, Australia.

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