



# Sexualities Health Educator

**SALARY RANGE (2017):** \$40–55 per hour

I started working as a sexualities educator as a volunteer during my undergraduate training. Since then, I worked for the Calgary Sexual Health Centre on my way to a full-time position with Alberta Health Services (AHS) working with teens. As a sexualities educator I am part counsellor, part researcher, and I'm always talking to anyone who will listen about the importance of sexual health education. In this job, I need to have confidence in my mandate to educate teens about sexual health and sexualities, the ingenuity to deliver my mandate within the conditions of my position with AHS and the enthusiasm to effectively tell what I know and engage teens in conversations about sexualities.

**The Tip:** Learn to speak about challenging topics in public—public speaking skills are invaluable!

## PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

### Evidence-based Decision Making

- Provide appropriate resources for teens who have questions about sex, genders and sexualities

### Advanced Research & Analysis Skills

- Critically analyze literature
- Synthesize key themes on sexualities from multiple sources

### Knowledge of Human Behaviour

- Able to relate to a wide range of teenagers from various cultural backgrounds
- Guide exploration of difficult topics
- Support growth and development of teens and their understanding of sexualities
- Sensitivity to how behaviours are shaped by circumstances, privilege, experience & attitudes

### Advanced Communication Skills

- Sensitivity to how communication is shaped by circumstances, authorship and intended audience
- Formulate and defend perspectives on sexuality that promote inclusiveness and empathy for all individuals

### Inter-personal Skills

- Work with diverse populations
- Support individuals to discuss difficult topics
- Empathetic

### Intra-personal Skills

- Understand personal biases regarding sexualities
- Self-aware, able to manage personal biases and personal perspectives on sexualities

### Additional Skills

- Strong organizational skills
- Intentional curiosity and thoughtful

creativity

- Fundamental business acumen
- Self-motivated, independent, ethical

## BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

### Education & Learning:

- Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) with an honours thesis focused on issues faced by polyamorous families
- Online courses on sexuality through the Alberta Society for the Promotion of Sexual Health
- Still attend conferences, workshops and training seminars each year to improve my skills and knowledge

I grew up in a home that never spoke about sex, and I remember all of the confusion my friends and I felt about sex and intimate relationships. I was interested in social work too until I found out it had more to do with systems, policy development and advocacy—I wanted to work with individuals, I wanted more science in my profession, and I was always curious about human behaviour and relationships.

### Employment Experiences:

- I worked for a local retailer in the mall that sold gag gifts and gifts related to sexuality. It fascinated me to see the reactions of customers to items such as flavoured condoms and lubes. I was also intrigued by how little our customers seemed to know about safe sex.
- I volunteered with the students' association at sex toy bingo
- I also worked part time with a not-for-profit agency that provided safe sex education for people who came into our centre. I began as a volunteer and when one of their sexuality educators left for another job I managed to get the job.

In my second year as an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to volunteer as a research assistant for a professor who studies sexuality and is fascinated by sex toys. I didn't have the highest GPA, but she loved my enthusiasm for the topic and decided to give me a chance to work on research projects with her.

### Community Experiences:

- In addition to sex toy bingo I volunteered one hour a week at our university's sexual assault centre, and then at our sexual education centre
- In the summers I helped with the organization of the pride parade that happened every September in our city. This opportunity opened up for me via the volunteer work I was doing at the nonprofit agency.

Volunteering for a university student centre was amazing. Helping to organize our local pride parade helped me feel connected to our community and I met so many interesting and diverse people. I will always help out with events like these no matter where my life takes me.

<p><b>Contextual Experiences:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I had the opportunity to travel in Asia for two months after the completion of my undergraduate degree—it was eye-opening on many levels</li> </ul>	<p>Seeing the differences in how sex and sexuality is portrayed in countries like Japan versus Canada was educational and made me realize how little I know about sexuality outside of the western perspective.</p>
<p><b>Relationships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My parents were an amazing support for me during my undergraduate years. While they found my fascination and passion for sexuality education a bit puzzling, they always supported me.</li> <li>• My first practicum supervisor became a true mentor for me. I can still e-mail her ten years later. She always replies and usually has some great reading suggestion.</li> </ul>	<p>The support I received as a research assistant was pivotal in my career path. My supervisor gave me the permission to ask questions I was interested and to further my passion for understanding sexuality and relationship issues. She is the one that encouraged me to continue to take classes in sexuality even if I didn't pursue a master's degree. Never stop learning was definitely her motto.</p>