

# PROJECT MARS COURSE OVERVIEW

Project MARS is a two-hour sex education course aimed at promoting sexual risk reduction, with particular emphasis on the effects of alcohol and cannabis on sexual behavior. It is intended to foster informed decision-making among participants, leading to healthier and safer sexual practices. Students will learn about the various risk factors associated with sexual activity, including unprotected sex, multiple sexual partners, and the influence of substance use. The Project MARS curriculum emphasizes the importance of consent and the role of communication in maintaining healthy and safe sexual relationships.

During this course, we explore the relationship between alcohol and sexual behavior. Delving into how alcohol impairs judgment, increases risk-taking behavior, and can lead to unprotected sex and coercive behavior. Project MARS also focuses on strategies to avoid risky sexual behavior when consuming alcohol. Cannabis, like alcohol, can influence sexual behavior. For this reason, we cover how cannabis use may affect decision-making, perception of risk, and sexual behavior.

Project MARS is facilitated using a technique called Motivational Interviewing. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a therapeutic approach that was originally developed in the field of addictions and is now being broadly applied to various areas where behavior change is desired. It is a goal-oriented, person-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping students to explore and resolve ambivalence. The approach of MI is fundamentally collaborative, respecting the student's autonomy and their ability to change. It assumes that motivation is dynamic and can be

influenced and that the educator's role is to evoke this motivation rather than trying to 'install' it.

As educators, we engage in Motivational Interviewing techniques to create a non-judgmental, supportive learning environment. Our goal is to guide students to a desired outcome by asking open-ended questions, providing affirmations, reflecting back on what students have said, and summarizing discussions to help students explore their attitudes and beliefs about sex. We work alongside students to brainstorm practical strategies to minimize the risks associated with sexual behavior and substance use. Topics include safer sex practices, effective communication about sex, consent, and setting personal boundaries, as well as responsible use of alcohol and cannabis. In doing so, we seek to help students develop the skills and confidence they need to make informed decisions about their own sexual health.

By the end of this course, students should:

1. Have a deeper understanding of sexual health and the risks associated with sexual activity and substance use.
2. Be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions that reduce these risks and promote healthy sexual behavior.

We also provide education and community resources focused on supporting adolescents.



**Confidential reproductive and sexual healthcare  
for teens and young adults.**