

The SIECUS State Profiles



OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA'S SEX ED SNAPSHOT

THE STATE OF SEX EDUCATION

Sex education continues to be a topic of debate among Oklahoma legislators, with legislation introduced over the past several years seeking to advance the quality of instruction young people receive. In 2021, Senator John Haste introduced [Senate Bill 89](#) in an effort to require health and physical education be taught in all Oklahoma schools. If successful, the legislation will require instruction on the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and the services needed to make appropriate health decisions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision making. While the legislative text does not name sexuality education, sexual health information and healthy relationships instruction are both understood to be critical components of health education, and health educators may use this opportunity to provide advanced sex education.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, advocates report that sex education was abruptly halted; with online programming only being able to be implemented recently following months of development and preparation. Additionally, the pandemic has drastically limited the ability of sex education programs to reach students and resulted in uncertainty regarding the quality of sex education young people are receiving statewide. To further advance sex education, advocates have developed a Community of Practice for Sexual Health for state programs and partners.

In 2019, a trio of bills was introduced that sought to advance sex education. Senator Kay Floyd championed [Senate Bill 926](#), successful legislation that requires curriculum related to human sexuality to include instruction on consent. Two additional bills, [House Bill 1018](#) and [Senate Bill 50](#), were introduced in an effort to update Oklahoma's HIV/AIDS curriculum requirements and require school districts to provide communication training concerning pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI) prevention to parents and students. While both bills were unsuccessful, advocates are capitalizing on the success of Senate Bill 926 and working on a collaborative effort to require health education in elementary schools. With continued efforts like these, advocates are optimistic about further advancing sex education in Oklahoma.

Sex education is not currently mandated in Oklahoma and schools are only required to provide instruction on HIV/AIDS prevention. Because Oklahoma schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide what type of sex education—if any at all—they provide to young people. While Oklahoma City Public Schools are taking steps to improve sex education, advocates in more rural areas have taken it upon themselves to ensure young people in their communities receive adequate sex education. For example, some members of the Muscogee Creek Nation, a Native tribe headquartered in Okmulgee, have begun offering medically accurate sex education courses to young people in their community.

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Mandating local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity regarding the quality of sex education that students receive. Advocates report that at least four different types of sex education curricula are used across the state, with students in larger cities such as Oklahoma City and Tulsa being more likely to receive sex education instruction. Thrive OKC, first formed in 2006 by six local organizations, provides opt-in medically accurate and evidence-based sex education to young people in Oklahoma City Public Schools and educates community members on pregnancy prevention. All students in the district receive sex education from outside agencies, including Thrive OKC, and advocates have noted that an increasing number of schools are providing comprehensive sex education.

Advocates report that the lack of a statewide mandate, funding and staff availability, and unfavorable public opinion in some communities are among the biggest barriers to providing comprehensive sex education to Oklahoma youth. Keeping these barriers in mind, advocates can take action right now to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After contacting their local school board, advocates can determine what topics are missing from sex education instruction, such as instruction on consent, sexual orientation and gender identity, and contraceptives. They can then vocalize the important need for advancing sex education requirements in their community and take action to address misinformation surrounding comprehensive sex education. Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing comprehensive sex education requirements. Advocates are encouraged to use the [SIECUS Community Action Toolkit](#) to guide local efforts to advance sex education.

STATE SEX EDUCATION POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

- Oklahoma schools are **not** required to teach sex education. However, they are required to provide HIV/AIDS prevention instruction.
 - Curriculum is not required to be comprehensive.
 - The primary purpose of the curriculum must be to inform students about abstinence.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, instruction must highlight that “engaging in homosexual activity, promiscuous sexual activity, intravenous drug use, or contact with contaminated blood products is now known to be primarily responsible for contact with the AIDS virus.”
- Curriculum must include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians can submit written notification if they do not want their children to participate in sexuality and HIV/AIDS courses. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)
- Oklahoma has no standard regarding medically accurate sex education curriculum. However, HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum must be medically accurate.

STATE HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights sex education bills that were introduced during the 2019 state legislative session as well as bills that have been introduced thus far in 2020. These proposed bills provide a brief overview of both recent and current legislative action taken to advance or restrict sex education. For a more comprehensive look at relevant legislation concerning sex education and related topics such as reproductive health care, LGBTQ rights, and HIV/AIDS, continue reading on to the “State Legislative Activity” section of Oklahoma’s profile.

2021 Legislative Session

Senate Bill 89 (pending): If successful, would require schools to provide health and physical education. Curriculum must include instruction on the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health

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information and the services needed to make appropriate health decisions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision making.

2020 Legislative Session

House Bill 3090 (failed):

- Sought to require life skills classes to include instruction on consent.

Senate Bill 1368 (failed):

- Sought to require sex education curriculum to be approved for medical accuracy by the State Department of Health.

MORE ON SEX ED IN OKLAHOMA

STATE LAW

Oklahoma does not require schools to teach sex education. However, according to Oklahoma Statutes [70-11-103.3](#) and [70-11-105.1](#), schools are required to provide human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention education. This education must be limited to the “discussion of the disease AIDS and its spread and prevention” and include instruction on consent. The class must be taught once during either grade 5 or 6, once during grades 7–9, and once during grades 10–12. All curricula and materials must be checked for medical accuracy by the Oklahoma Department of Health and must only include “factual medical information for AIDS prevention.” Additionally,

- D) AIDS prevention education shall specifically teach students that:
 - 1) Engaging in homosexual activity, promiscuous sexual activity, intravenous drug use, or contact with contaminated blood products is now known to be primarily responsible for contact with the AIDS virus;
 - 2) Avoiding the activities specified [above] is the only method of preventing the spread of the virus;
 - 3) Sexual intercourse, with or without condoms, with any person testing positive for HIV antibodies, or any other person infected with HIV, places that individual in a high-risk category for developing AIDS.
- E) The program of AIDS prevention education shall teach that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain means for the prevention of the spread or contraction of the AIDS virus through sexual contact. It shall also teach that artificial means of birth control are not a certain means of preventing the spread of the AIDS virus, and reliance on such methods puts a person at risk for exposure to the disease.

If a school district chooses to teach sex education, all curricula and materials must be approved for medical accuracy by the state and by the district superintendent. All materials must also be available to parents for review. In addition, all sex education classes must have “the teaching of or informing students about the practice of abstinence” as one of their primary purposes.

A school district must provide written notification of all sex and HIV/AIDS prevention classes. Parents or guardians can submit written notification if they do not want their children to participate in such classes. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

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STATE STANDARDS

Oklahoma’s [Academic Standards for Health Education](#) provides a standard for the development of health curricula. Sex education is not mentioned.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

State legislative activity related to sex education does not take place in isolation from the broader embroiled political and policy climate. Attacks on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals, and efforts to limit access to abortion care and other reproductive health care services prevent students from receiving comprehensive sex education and accessing sexual and reproductive health care services. Below are highlights of current legislative activity related to these topics. **Oklahoma's 2021 session convened on February 1, 2021.**

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
HOUSE BILL 1004	PROHIBITS THE STATE OR ANY SUBDIVISION OF THE STATE FROM PROHIBITING CONVERSION THERAPY.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY SERVICES (2021)
HOUSE BILL 1102	PROHIBITS ABORTION UNLESS IN THE CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH (2021)
HOUSE BILL 1641	PROHIBITS CURRICULUM THAT PROMOTES OR DEGRADES ANY RACE OR GENDER OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMON EDUCATION (2021)
SENATE BILL 89	MANDATES THE TEACHING OF BOTH HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION. REQUIRES INSTRUCTION ON THE ABILITY TO OBTAIN, PROCESS, AND UNDERSTAND BASIC HEALTH INFORMATION AND THE SERVICES NEEDED TO MAKE APPROPRIATE HEALTH DECISIONS, ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS, AND RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING.	FIRST READING (2021)
SENATE BILL 495	ASSERTS THAT HUMAN LIFE BEGINS AT THE MOMENT OF FERTILIZATION, PROHIBITING ABORTION AND CLASSIFYING THE PROCEDURE AS MURDER.	FAILED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2021)
SENATE BILL 583	PROHIBITS MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS FROM PROVIDING GENDER AFFIRMING CARE TO MINORS.	REFERRED TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2021)
SENATE BILL 612	PROHIBITS ABORTION UNLESS IN THE CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.	REFERRED TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2021)
SENATE BILL 676	PROHIBITS MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS FROM PROVIDING GENDER AFFIRMING CARE TO MINORS.	REFERRED TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2021)

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SENATE BILL 723	PROHIBITS ABORTION IF A FETAL HEARTBEAT IS DETECTED.	REFERRED TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2021)
HOUSE BILL 3090	REQUIRES LIFE SKILLS CLASSES TO TEACH CONSENT TRAINING.	DIED IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMON EDUCATION (2020)
HOUSE BILL 3872	PROHIBITS HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS FROM PERFORMING CONVERSION THERAPY ON MINORS.	DIED IN THE HOUSE (2020)
HOUSE BILL 4116	PROHIBITS ABORTION IN ALL CASES WITH NO EXCEPTIONS. ANY DOCTOR WHO IS FOUND TO HAVE PERFORMED OR SUPERVISED AN ABORTION IS SUBJECT TO 40-50 YEARS IN PRISON.	DIED IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES (2020)
SENATE BILL 13	PROHIBITS ABORTION; CLASSIFYING THE PROCEDURE AS HOMICIDE.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES THEN TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS (2020)
SENATE BILL 1395	AMENDS OKLAHOMA STATUTE TO PERMIT MINORS WHO ARE AT LEAST 16 YEARS OF AGE TO CONSENT TO A RANGE OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2020)
SENATE BILL 1368	REQUIRES SEX EDUCATION CURRICULUM TO BE APPROVED FOR MEDICAL ACCURACY BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION (2020)
SENATE BILL 1786	PROHIBITS PHYSICIANS FROM PERFORMING ABORTIONS; DOING SO DENIES THEM THE ABILITY TO OBTAIN OR RENEW THEIR LICENSE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2020)
SENATE BILL 1819	PROHIBITS MINORS FROM UNDERGOING GENDER AFFIRMING MEDICAL TREATMENT.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (2020)
SENATE BILL 1859	ABORTION IS PROHIBITED WHERE A FETA HEARTBEAT OR BRAIN WAVES CAN BE DETECTED.	DIED IN THE HOUSE (2020)

LEGISLATIVE KEY

<p>SEX EDUCATION REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY HIV/AIDS (THAT IMPACTS YOUTH)</p>

YOUTH SEXUAL HEALTH DATA

Young people are more than their health behaviors and outcomes. While data can be a powerful tool to demonstrate the sex education and sexual health care needs of young people, it is important to be mindful that these behaviors and outcomes are impacted by systemic inequities present in our society that affect an individual's sexual health and well-being. To learn more about Oklahoma's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#).

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STATE SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES DATA

In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the School Health Profiles, which measure school health policies and practices and highlight which health topics were taught in schools across the country. Since the data were collected from self-administered questionnaires completed by schools' principals and lead health education teachers, the CDC notes that one limitation of the School Health Profiles is bias toward the reporting of more positive policies and practices. In the School Health Profiles, the [CDC identifies 20 sexual health education topics](#) as critical for ensuring a young person's sexual health.

Oklahoma did not participate in the 2016 or 2018 School Health Profiles.

The quality of sex education taught often reflects funding available for sex education programs.

To learn more about federal funding streams, [click here](#).