

State Profiles

Arizona State Profile



Arizona's State of Sex Ed

Sex education is not currently mandated in Arizona. As Arizona schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide what, if any, type of sex education they provide to youth.

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Sex Ed Requirement



Sex Ed Content



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Current Requirement

- Arizona schools are **not** required to teach sex education or HIV education.
 - If a school chooses to teach sex education, it must stress abstinence.
- If HIV education is offered, the curriculum must be medically accurate.
- If sex education is offered, curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- If sex education is offered, curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians must provide written permission for their children to participate in sex education. [This is referred to as an “opt-in” policy.](#)

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have actively worked to advance sex education in Arizona and to defeat restrictive legislation over the past several years. In 2022, [House Bill 2192](#) was introduced by Representative Pamela Powers Hannley (D-9) to change Arizona’s “opt-in” policy to an “opt-out” policy and require sex education to be medically accurate and comprehensive. [Senate Bill 1691](#) was also introduced by State Senator Sally Gonzalez (D-3) in an effort to change Arizona’s “opt-in” policy to an “opt-out” policy, mandate sex education to be medically accurate and age appropriate from K-12 grade, create guidelines for sex education programs in grades K-12, and require the Board of Education to develop minimum standards and training for sex education instructors. While both these bills were unsuccessful, they reflect positive efforts to reform Arizona’s sex education.

Despite these efforts, Arizona was not immune to the wave of coordinated state legislation attacking sex education and other inclusive programs in schools in 2022. Sex education in the state was dealt a blow when legislators enacted [House Bill 2495](#). Sponsored by Representative Jake Hoffman (R-12), [House Bill 2495](#) prohibits Arizona public schools from using or referring students to sexually explicit material unless the school acquires parental consent *and* the material is either “Classical Literature,” “Early American Literature,” or required for a course to obtain college credit. In the bill, sexually explicit material includes “masturbation, homosexuality, sexual intercourse or physical contact with a person’s clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, buttocks or if such person is female, breast.” Advocates in the state worry that this law will effectively ban any discussion of LGBTQAI+ identities, if not sex education all together. In addition, numerous bills were introduced under the guise of “parental rights”. These bills represent the opposition’s attempt to attack sex education by stigmatizing vital and important curriculum and requiring additional, unnecessary procedures for consent, review of instructional materials, and advanced notification. While this “parental rights” legislation was ultimately unsuccessful, these bills represent one of the many challenges faced by advocates in Arizona’s legislative landscape.

Unfortunately, [House Bill 2495](#) comes on the heels of the passage of another regressive bill, [House Bill 2035](#) in 2021. This act requires written parental consent for their children to participate in sex education instruction—or any broader instruction related to sexuality—in public and charter schools, and prevents students in grades 1-5 from participating in sex education. “[Opt-in](#)” policies such as this create unnecessary hurdles that prevent students from accessing the sex education they have a right to receive.

Local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in glaring disparities regarding the quality of sex education that students receive. Such discretion allows for the implementation of policies and curriculum that stigmatize marginalized youth, such as students of color and LGBTQAI+ youth, and presents further challenges in ensuring that low income districts have access to the resources needed to implement sex education.

Right now, advocates can take action to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. Particularly, advocates can invest in local school board races to elect strong advocates for sex education. In addition, they can build coalitions to advance positive narratives about sex

education that center Native youth and push for a statewide opt-out policy. Advocates can also contact their local school board to 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 instruction requirements in their community. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. For a current overview of pending legislation, see table below. Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing sex education requirements and allocating additional funding to support districts in implementing more advanced curriculum. Advocates are encouraged to use the SIECUS [Community Action Toolkit](#) to guide local efforts and to reach out to [EducateUs](#) to get connected to local advocacy groups.

[More on sex ed in Arizona...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

Arizona law does not require schools to teach sex education or HIV education. However, [Arizona Revised Statutes §§ 15-711, 15-716, and 15-102](#) state that if a school chooses to teach these topics, instruction must be age-appropriate, include instruction on the laws relating to sexual conduct with a minor (grades 7-12), and stress abstinence. Further, if a school chooses to teach HIV education, such instruction must be medically accurate.

[Arizona Administrative Code R7-2-303](#) states that schools may “provide a specific elective lesson or lessons concerning sex education as a supplement to the health course of study.” Schools that choose to provide sex education must have the lessons approved by the school’s local governing board. All sex education materials and instruction that discuss sexual intercourse must:

1. Stress that pupils should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are mature adults;
2. Emphasize that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only method for avoiding pregnancy that is 100% effective;

3. Stress that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) have severe consequences and constitute a serious and widespread public health problem;
4. Include a discussion of the possible emotional and psychological consequences of pre-adolescent and adolescent sexual intercourse and the consequences of pre-adolescent and adolescent pregnancy; and
5. Advise pupils of Arizona law pertaining to the financial responsibilities of parenting and legal liabilities related to sexual intercourse with a minor.

In Arizona, parents or guardians must provide written permission for the child to participate in sex education. This is referred to as an “opt-in” policy.

Further, after the enactment of **House Bill 2035**, *Arizona Revised Statutes 15-711 Sec. A* prohibits instruction in sex education prior to fifth grade.

State Standards

Arizona has *Health Education Standards* in place that provide a foundation for curricula in the state for grades K-12. Although concepts related to sexuality are not specifically mentioned in the standards, “disease prevention” is included.

State Legislation

State legislative activity related to sex education does not take place in isolation from the broader embroiled political and policy climate. In 2022, a national wave of attacks on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQAI+) individuals, attempts to restrict or prohibit instruction on “divisive concepts” such as “Critical Race Theory” (which is not taught in public schools), and efforts to limit access to abortion care and other reproductive healthcare services swept the country in an effort to prevent students from receiving sex education and accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Below are highlights of current legislative activity related to these topics. **Arizona’s 2024 annual legislative session convenes January 8, 2024.**

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 Arizona's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#). At the time of publication, the 2021 YRBS data was not made available yet.

Alabama School Health Profiles Data

In 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the 2020 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 22 sexual health education topics](#) as critical for ensuring a young person's sexual health. Below are key instruction highlights for secondary schools in Arizona as [reported](#) for the 2019–2020 school year.

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 7.6% of Arizona secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 19.8% of Arizona secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching about the benefits of being sexually abstinent

- 21.4% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 56.3% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching how to access valid and reliable information, products, and services related to HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy

- 18.3% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to access valid and reliable information, products, and services related to HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 50.7% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to access valid and reliable information, products, and services related to HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching how to create and sustain healthy and respectful relationships

- 23.3% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to create and sustain healthy and respectful relationships in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 56.4% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to create and sustain healthy and respectful relationships in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching about preventive care that is necessary to maintain reproductive and sexual health

- 15.2% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about preventive care that is necessary to maintain reproductive and sexual health in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 46.5% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about preventive care that is necessary to maintain reproductive and sexual health in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching how to correctly use a condom

- 13.7% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 32.5% of Arizona secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching about methods of contraception other than condoms

- 18.6% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.

- 46.5% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities

- 10.7% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 40.9% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported teaching about how gender roles and stereotypes affect goals, decision-making, and relationships

- 13.6% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 45.0% of Arizona secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 9, 10, 11, or 12.

Reported providing curricula or supplementary materials relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth

- 23.4% of Arizona secondary schools provided students with curricula or supplementary materials that included HIV, STD, or pregnancy prevention information relevant to LGBTQ youth.

Visit the CDC's *School Health Profiles* report for additional information on school health policies and practices.

The quality of sex education taught often reflects funding available for sex education programs. To learn more about federal funding streams, [click here](#).

