

State Profiles

Connecticut State Profile



Connecticut's State of Sex Ed

Sex education is **not** currently mandated in Connecticut. If schools want to teach sex education they may follow the state's guidelines for sexual health education which include "comprehensive, medically accurate instruction" among other requirements. As Connecticut 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.



Sex Ed
Requirement



Sex Ed
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Current Requirement

- Connecticut schools are **not** required to teach sex education. However, they are required to provide instruction on human growth and development and disease prevention, including AIDS.
 - This curriculum is not required to align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#).
- Connecticut has no law regarding instruction on abstinence.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians can remove their children from sex education and STI/HIV education with written notification. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)
- Connecticut has no statute regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have worked diligently to advance sex education across Connecticut. In 2022, House Bill 5243 was enacted, requiring school personnel to complete training when a student in the school is reported to be abused by an adult. This bill represents a step towards better teacher training on sex education.

Schools in Connecticut are required to teach specific elements related to sex education, including instruction on human growth and development and

disease prevention. However, they are not required to provide instruction on any additional topics. The *Guidelines for the Sexual Health Education Component of Comprehensive Health Education* offer more advanced sex education guidelines for educators, but state statute does not require schools to follow them. As a result, instruction varies greatly by district depending on how closely each school board aligns their curriculum with the guidelines, if they choose to provide sex education at all. Local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity 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. 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. 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 comprehensive sex education. Advocates are encouraged to use the SIECUS *Community Action Toolkit* to guide local efforts to advance sex education and to reach out to *EducateUs* to get connected to local advocacy groups.

More on sex ed in Connecticut...

State Law: A Closer Look

Connecticut state law does not require schools to teach sex education, but *Connecticut General Statutes §§ 164-10-16(b)–(f)* does require schools to teach human growth and development and disease prevention. Connecticut law also states: “Each local and regional board of education shall offer during the regular

school day planned, ongoing and systematic instruction on acquired immune deficiency syndrome [AIDS], as taught by legally qualified teachers.”

The Connecticut State Board of Education is charged with developing family life education curriculum guidelines that “shall include, but not be limited to, information on developing a curriculum including family planning; human sexuality; parenting; nutrition; and the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic and social aspects of family life, provided the curriculum guides shall not include information pertaining to abortion as an alternative to family planning.” However, Connecticut statute also states that the instruction must be left to the discretion of local or regional boards of education.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from sex education and/or STI/HIV education classes with written notification. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

State Standards

The *Guidelines for the Sexual Health Education Component of Comprehensive Health Education* provide guidance for sex education curricula in Connecticut. This 79-page document includes “differentiating between gender identity, sexual orientation, and the concept of gender roles,” identifying and discussing “the value of postponing sexual activity, the methods and effectiveness of contraception, ways to protect oneself from communicable diseases,” and defining and describing “healthy sexuality and sexual expression throughout the lifespan.”

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. **Connecticut's 2024 annual legislative session convenes February 7, 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 Connecticut's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#). At the time of publication, the 2021 YRBS data was not made available yet.

Connecticut 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 Connecticut as [reported](#) for the 2019–2020 school year.

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 17.1% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 58.8% of Connecticut 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

- 68.9% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.

- 96.8% of Connecticut 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

- 62.5% of Connecticut 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.
- 94.2% of Connecticut 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

- 73.5% of Connecticut 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.
- 96.8% of Connecticut 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

- 54.6% of Connecticut 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.
- 92.6% of Connecticut 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

- 25.8% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 82.5% of Connecticut 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

- 48.1% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 91.3% of Connecticut 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

- 50.4% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 84.0% of Connecticut 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

- 54.1% of Connecticut secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 86.6% of Connecticut 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

- 62.4% of Connecticut 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](#).

