

State Profiles

Delaware State Profile



Delaware's State of Sex Ed

Sex education is mandated in Delaware, although it must stress abstinence, and is **not** required to be medically accurate.

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Sex Ed Requirements



Sex Ed Content



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Current Requirement

- Delaware schools are required to teach sex education as part of the Comprehensive Health Education Program required in grades K-12.
 - Delaware statute states that curriculum must be comprehensive. However, the state's standards do not meet the **nationally recognized standards** for sex education.
 - Curriculum must stress abstinence.
- Curriculum is required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity, in accordance with their health education standards.
- Curriculum is required to include instruction on consent.
- Delaware statute has no standard regarding the ability of parents and guardians to enroll or remove their children from sex education instruction.
- Delaware has no standard regarding medically accurate sex education instruction. However, curriculum on consent must be evidence informed.
- In order to graduate high school, students must receive 0.5 credits of comprehensive health education.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have worked tirelessly over the past decades to advance sex education in Delaware, culminating in the passage of **Senate Bill 78** in 2019. Sponsored by Senator Nicole Poore (D-12), the bill requires schools to include age-appropriate and evidence-informed instruction on consent and personal boundaries for students in grades 7-12, marking a significant advancement to sex education requirements statewide.

Right now, advocates can take action by contacting their local school boards to determine what is missing from sex education instruction, such as whether a curriculum is medically accurate or if instruction on topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity or contraceptives are included. 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. 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 Delaware...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

[Delaware Administrative Code title 14, § 851](#) requires sex education as part of K-12 health education. This education must be coordinated by an employee in each school district and overseen by a District Consolidated Application Planning Committee. The committee must consist of teachers, parents, school nurses, community leaders, law enforcement, and other community members “with expertise in the areas of health; family life; and safe and drug-free schools and communities.” Sex education must include a HIV prevention program “that stresses the benefits of abstinence from high-risk behaviors.”

Delaware administrative code also sets a minimum number of hours for “comprehensive health education and family life education.” For students in grades K-4, the minimum is set at 30 hours per grade, 10 of which must be dedicated to drug and alcohol education. In grades five and six, the minimum is set at 35 hours per grade, 15 of which must be dedicated to drug and alcohol education. In grades seven and eight, the minimum is set at 60 hours per grade, 15 of which must be dedicated to drug and alcohol education. In order to graduate high school, students must receive 0.5 credits of comprehensive health education. Delaware statute does not require parental permission for students to participate in sexuality or HIV education.

State Standards

Sex education courses must also follow the [Delaware Health Education Standards](#) and the courses must include instruction on decision-making skills and the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors. The Department of Education also provides model curricula [online](#) for educators.

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. **Delaware’s 2024 annual legislative session convenes January 9, 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 Delaware’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#). At the time of publication, the 2021 YRBS data was not made available yet.

Delaware 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 Delaware as reported for the 2019–2020 school year.

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 35.4% of Delaware secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 79.1% of Delaware 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

- 81.0% of Delaware secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 100.0% of Delaware 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

- 76.8% of Delaware 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.
- 100.0% of Delaware 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

- 81.0% of Delaware 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.

- 100.0% of Delaware 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

- 73.3% of Delaware 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.
- 95.4% of Delaware 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

- 46.8% of Delaware secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 87.4% of Delaware 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

- 59.0% of Delaware secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 96.0% of Delaware 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

- 54.7% of Delaware secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 91.7% of Delaware 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

- 65.9% of Delaware secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 87.0% of Delaware 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

- 46.2% of Delaware 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](#).

