

State Profiles

Georgia State Profile



Georgia's State of Sex Ed

Sex education is mandated in Georgia, but it is not required to be comprehensive or medically accurate, and instruction must stress abstinence.

[Download Scorecard](#)

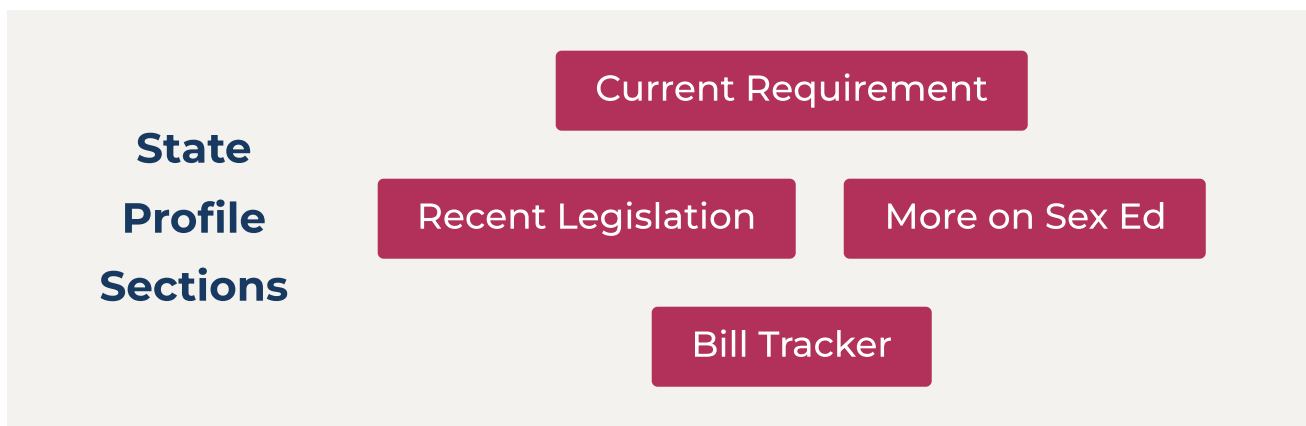


Sex Ed Requirements



Sex Ed Content





Current Requirements

- Georgia schools are required to provide sex education and AIDS prevention education.
 - Curriculum is not required to align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#).
 - Instruction must emphasize abstinence from sexual activity until marriage as an important personal goal.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent. However age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education is required in kindergarten through grade nine.
- Parents may remove their children from all or part of sex education instruction with written notification. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)
- Georgia has no regulation regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have diligently pushed for a series of actions to advance sex education in Georgia at both state and local levels over the past decade. [House Bill 1220](#) was introduced in 2022 in an effort to require instruction on consent in K-9 schools, creating some optimism about future opportunities to advance sex education requirements across the state. Unfortunately, this bill comes after the passage of [Senate Bill 226](#) in 2021, which requires school districts to adopt a policy for the

removal of books with “harmful materials” on request of parents. Georgia legislators also enacted [House Bill 1084](#), which prohibits instruction on divisive concepts. In a similar vein, the passage of [House Bill 1178](#) establishes a Parents Bill of Rights including parents’ right to direct their child’s education and procedures for them to object to course material or withdrawing students from instruction. While appearing to increase “parental rights,” these bills actually stigmatize the vital and important information provided by sex education and infringe upon young people’s right to access this education to help them make healthy, informed decisions for themselves. Moreover, the majority of parents and guardians, along with the general public overwhelmingly support access to school-based sex education.

In addition to legislative attacks on public education to restrict school-based curriculum requirements, advocates report that a lack of funding, inadequate support in implementing curriculum, and reluctance of school districts to update sex education requirements all create significant barriers toward advancing sex education. Further, local control over sex education allows for sex education to be taught that excludes and/or stigmatizes marginalized youth, such as students of color and LGBTQIA+ youth, and presents further challenges in ensuring that low income districts have access to resources to implement sex education. Marginalized youth, and Black youth in particular, in Georgia continuously face racist, systematic barriers to health care and education. These barriers result in disproportionate representation among adverse health outcomes.

Advocates are working tirelessly to address these issues. The Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP) works to advance sex education across Georgia over the past twenty years through legislative advocacy in addition to sex education implementation support in local jurisdictions.

Right now, advocates can take action to advance sex education in their community. After identifying what topics are missing from local sex education requirements, advocates can vocalize the importance of implementing specific elements of sex education, such as trauma informed, culturally responsive curriculum that addresses the needs of youth of color and LGBTQ youth and includes instruction on consent. Advocates can also emphasize the importance of requiring curriculum to be evidence based and medically accurate. Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing sex education requirements and increasing funding to support the implementation of sex education in districts that lack the capacity to do so.

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 Georgia...

State Law: A Closer Look

Schools in Georgia are required by [Georgia Code Annotated §§ 20-2-143](#) to teach sex education and AIDS prevention education. Georgia law mandates that the state board of education determines minimum guidelines that sex education programs must satisfy. The [guidelines](#) created by the board require instruction to “emphasize abstinence from sexual activity until marriage and fidelity in marriage as important personal goals.” In addition, [Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.12](#) states that sex education instruction should address peer pressure and promote “high self-esteem, local community values, and abstinence from sexual activity as an effective method of prevention of pregnancy, STIs, and AIDS.” Local school boards are largely responsible for deciding specific subjects that education must cover, age-appropriate messages, and the grade level in which topics are introduced.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from all or part of sex and/or STI/HIV education by sending written notice to the school. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

State Standards

The Georgia Department of Education has also established the [Georgia Performance Standards for Health Education](#) for grades K–12. These standards were most recently revised in 2021. The health education standards act as a “framework for local schools to use in order to create an instructional program that will enable their students to become healthy and capable of academic success.” Beginning in grade 8, health education standards require discussion

on abstinence as the “most effective and healthy means for preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs).” Sexual violence prevention instruction is included in grades K–12 standards.

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

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

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 11.9% of Georgia secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 21.5% of Georgia 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

- 51.5% of Georgia 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 Georgia 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

- 46.2% of Georgia 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.
- 93.5% of Georgia 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

- 47.6% of Georgia 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 Georgia 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

- 47.6% of Georgia 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.
- 88.4% of Georgia 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

- 21.3% of Georgia secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 45.3% of Georgia 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

- 6.9% of Georgia secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 71.1% of Georgia 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

- 34.6% of Georgia secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 71.7% of Georgia 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

- 26.7% of Georgia secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 63.8% of Georgia 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

- 37.0% of Georgia 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](#).

