

State Profiles

Illinois State Profile



Illinois's State of Sex Ed

Illinois schools are **not** required to teach sex education. However, if they do teach sex education it is required to be aligned with the [National Sex Education Standards](#).

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Sex Ed Requirements



Sex Ed Content



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Current Requirements

- Illinois schools are not required to teach sex education.
 - If schools choose to teach sex education, however, it is required to include instruction that is age and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, culturally appropriate, inclusive, trauma-informed, and replicates evidence-based or evidence-informed programs.
- If sex education is taught, the curriculum is required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- If sex education is taught, the curriculum must include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians may remove their children from any or all sex education, family life programs, and/or STD/human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention programs. **This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.**

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have taken significant action over the past several years to advance sex education in Illinois. In 2021 Illinois legislators enacted [Senate Bill 818](#), which requires that if sex education is offered in schools in grades K through 12, educators must teach comprehensive instruction that is age, culturally, and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, inclusive, trauma-informed, and replicates evidence-based or evidence-informed programs.

While advocates continue to work to advance sex education, there were still attempts to regress progress with the introduction of [House Bill 5349](#) and [5494](#)

in 2022. These bills sought to change sex education from “opt out” to “opt in,” creating unnecessary barriers to receiving this critical instruction. While ultimately unsuccessful, these bills represent some of the challenges faced by advocates in Illinois’ legislative landscape.

In 2023, Senator Ram Villivalam (D-8) introduced [Senate Bill 1428](#) in an effort to provide local schools with grants to teach “comprehensive personal health and safety education” for kindergarten through fifth grade and “comprehensive sexual health education” in sixth through twelfth grade. This represents advocates’ persistent efforts to advance sex education in the state. Despite this, Illinois advocates will face an uphill battle with the introduction of several “parental rights” legislation that seek to increase parental disruption in the public education system and restrict sex education and other inclusive forms of education.

Since Illinois schools are not mandated to provide sex education, school districts are left to decide whether they provide sex education to youth. 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.

Additionally, advocates report that since the passage of [Senate Bill 818](#), groups such as Awake Illinois and Moms for Liberty have attempted to counter the implementation of the National Sex Ed Standards and stop schools from implementing the law through misinformation, bullying, and even at times threatening, local school and library boards. This small but vocal minority are reported to focus their efforts largely on disrupting and seeking seats on school boards. To address the current gaps in education, organizations such as Planned Parenthood of Illinois and Equality Illinois are working towards a statewide sex education mandate. The ACLU of Illinois is also working to advance sex education by performing direct outreach and analyzing data to identify and provide resources that will help facilitate implementation of [Senate Bill 818](#). Additionally, founded in 2021 by high school students, the Sex Ed Initiative published the handbook “Shattering the Taboo: A Guide to Sexual Health Education” in July 2022. This comprehensive guide for high schoolers is the product of collaboration between students, medical experts including Lurie Children’s Hospital and UIC

School of Public Health, and community advocates like the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault. The Initiative hopes that the handbook will help guide sex education curriculum.

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, such as instruction that is culturally responsive to the needs of young people of color or instruction on topics including sexual orientation and gender identity. They can then vocalize the important need for advancing sex education requirements in their community. Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing sex education requirements statewide. 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 Illinois...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

The [Illinois Critical Health Problems and Comprehensive Health Education Act](#) states that the following topics must be addressed in all elementary and secondary schools:

[H]uman ecology and health, human growth and development; the emotional, psychological, physiological, hygienic, and social responsibilities of family life, including sexual abstinence until marriage; [and the] prevention and control of disease, including instruction in grades 6 through 12 on the prevention, transmission, and spread of [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] AIDS.

As of 2013, schools that teach sex education are no longer required to emphasize that “abstinence is the expected norm” and are instead expected to teach both abstinence and contraception. All courses that discuss sexual intercourse are to address “the hazards of sexual intercourse . . . [and] the latest medical

information citing the failure and success rates of condoms,” and include explanations of when it is “unlawful for males to have sexual relations with females under the age of 18.” Course material must also include information regarding responsible parenting. In 2014, the Illinois State Board of Education published [Public Act 98-0441](#) to provide further details on state sex education requirements.

In 2018, Illinois enrolled [Public Act 100-0684](#), requiring sex education instruction to include discussion on consent, sexual harassment, and sexual assault; and [Public Act 100-1043](#), requiring the State Board of Education to implement a pilot program including instruction on parenting education for grades 9-12, which may be included in sex education classes. In 2021, Senate Bill 818, enrolled as [Public Act 102-0522](#), requires schools that offer sex education to teach comprehensive sex education that is age, culturally, and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, inclusive, trauma-informed, and replicates evidence-based or evidence-informed programs. This constitutes an **“if/then” policy** which means that **IF** sex education is taught in schools, then it must meet state specified requirements according to law. However, because it does not mandate sex education, local jurisdictions are still able to decide whether to provide sex education at all.

Illinois law also [provides guidelines](#) for family life education courses. These courses are “designed to promote wholesome and comprehensive understanding of the emotional, psychological, physiological, hygienic, and social responsibility aspects of family life,” and therefore must “include the teaching of the alternatives to abortion, appropriate to the various grade levels.” The Illinois Superintendent of Education must prepare the course of instruction for family life education, make it available to school districts, and “develop a procedure for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the family life courses of instruction in each local school district, including the setting of reasonable goals for reduced sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and premarital pregnancy.” Parents or guardians may remove their children from any or all sex education, family life programs, and/or STD/human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention programs. This is referred to as an [“opt-out” policy](#).

State Standards

The [Illinois Learning Standards for Physical Development and Health](#) was updated in 2014 but does not provide curriculum guidance for sex education and

only briefly mentions that students should be able to “explain the basic functions of the reproductive system” by grade eight and “demonstrate basic knowledge of HIV and AIDS.” The Standards also address effective communication and decision-making skills.

As a requirement of [Public Act 102-0522](#), the State Board of Education must develop learning standards for sex education on or before August 1, 2022 that are in accordance with the [National Sex Education 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. **The Illinois General Assembly 2024 legislative session convenes January 16, 2024, operating as a full-time legislature.**

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

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

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 20.5% of Illinois secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 44.3% of Illinois 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

- 83.0% of Illinois secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 99.0% of Illinois 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

- 70.9% of Illinois 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.
- 96.3% of Illinois 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

- 84.0% of Illinois 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.

- 98.1% of Illinois 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

- 69.4% of Illinois 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.
- 94.5% of Illinois 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

- 28.1% of Illinois secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 71.1% of Illinois 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

- 59.3% of Illinois secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 90.3% of Illinois 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

- 48.9% of Illinois secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 79.9% of Illinois 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

- 59.4% of Illinois secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 78.5% of Illinois 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

- 54.7% of Illinois 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](#).

