

State Profiles

Indiana State Profile



Indiana's State of Sex Ed

Sex education is **not** currently mandated in Indiana, although instruction on HIV is required. Instruction on sex education and HIV must stress abstinence and is not required to be medically accurate, evidence-based, or comprehensive. As Indiana 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 Content



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Current Requirements

- Indiana schools are **not** required to teach sex education. However, schools are required to provide instruction on HIV.
 - Curriculum must stress abstinence as the expected social standard.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- Schools are required to make two attempts to receive written permission from parents or guardians for students to participate in sex education before automatically enrolling students in the instruction.
- Indiana has no regulation regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have faced a significant uphill battle in advancing sex education requirements across Indiana. Advocates' diligent efforts culminated in the introduction of [House Bill 1047](#) in 2022 which would have required sex education to be comprehensive, medically accurate, and developmentally appropriate while still emphasizing abstinence. This bill was not successful. Additionally, in 2022, regressive legislation with the potential to threaten sex education was introduced, including [House Bill 1362](#). This bill would forbid schools from providing students in kindergarten through grade 5 with any "inappropriate sexual material" or make available to a student who is enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 any "sexually explicit material." If enacted, this bill threatened educators' ability to teach sex education. While ultimately unsuccessful, this bill

and similar 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 Indiana’s legislative landscape. Unfortunately, in 2023, Indiana passed [House Bill 1608](#) which prohibits sex education before 3rd grade.

Sex education is not currently mandated in Indiana outside of instruction on HIV and schools that do teach sex education must emphasize abstinence. As Indiana schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide what type of sex education—if any at all—they provide 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. This can be due to a variety of factors such as crisis pregnancy centers being able to provide free programs and thus more likely to target such students.

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. Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing sex education requirements. 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 Indiana...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

Indiana Codes [20-30-5-12](#) and [20-34-3-17](#) require that schools provide instruction on acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and “integrate this effort to the extent possible with instruction on other dangerous communicable diseases.” The law states that the Department of Education must work with the Department of Health to develop AIDS prevention educational materials and make them available to school districts. These materials must “stress the moral aspects of abstinence from sexual activity” and “state that the best way to avoid AIDS is for young people to refrain from sexual activity until they are ready as adults to establish, in the context of marriage, a mutually faithful monogamous relationship.”

Indiana Code [20-30-5-13](#) requires that, with respect to instruction on sex education and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), accredited schools meet the following criteria:

- Require a teacher to teach abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
- Include in the instruction that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, STDs, and other associated health problems; and
- Include in the instruction that the best way to avoid STDs and other associated health problems is to establish a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage.

In 2018, Indiana enacted [Public Law 154](#), which requires schools to make two attempts to receive written parental permission in order for students to participate in sex education instruction. If permission is not confirmed or is not denied after two attempts, students will be automatically enrolled in the instruction. Parents may subsequently withdraw students from instruction. [This includes elements of both an “opt-in” and an “opt-out” policy.](#)

In 2023, Indiana enacted [Public Law 248](#) (formerly known as House Bill 1608), which adds a new chapter to the Indiana Code (IC 20-30-17-2) that prohibits instruction on human sexuality prior to third grade.

State Standards

The state department of education provides the *Indiana Academic Standards for Health and Wellness*, which is consistent with Indiana Code [20-30-5-13](#), to use as a foundation for schools that provide sex education. The Indiana Department of Education also provides a [Health and Wellness standards overview](#). These standards do not discuss sex education, although the Health and Wellness standards overview includes Indiana statutes related to sex education.

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

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

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 14.4% of Indiana secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 27.9% of Indiana 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

- 72.6% of Indiana secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 95.4% of Indiana 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

- 63.3% of Indiana 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.
- 90.8% of Indiana 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

- 75.2% of Indiana 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.
- 94.3% of Indiana 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

- 55.8% of Indiana 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.
- 86.7% of Indiana 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

- 19.8% of Indiana secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 41.2% of Indiana 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

- 36.3% of Indiana secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 63.6% of Indiana 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

- 35.1% of Indiana secondary schools taught students about diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 51.9% of Indiana 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

- 44.8% of Indiana secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 66.8% of Indiana 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

- 38.0% of Indiana 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](#).

