

State Profiles

North Dakota State Profile



North Dakota's State of Sex Ed

North Dakota schools **are** required to teach sex education through its health education course. Health education must be in alignment with [North Dakota Health Education Content Standards](#).

[Download Scorecard](#)



Sex Ed Requirements



Sex Ed Content



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Bill Tracker

Current Requirement

- Curriculum must be abstinence-based.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, the [North Dakota Health Education Content Standards](#) includes discussion of sexual orientation in their definition of sexuality.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- North Dakota statute has no standard regarding the ability of parents and guardians to remove their children from sex education instruction.
- North Dakota has no regulation regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates in North Dakota have faced a continuous uphill battle in advancing sex education since the implementation of the [2012 abstinence-based sex education requirement](#).

School districts are left to decide what quality of sex education they provide within the guidelines provided through the [North Dakota Health Education Content Standards](#). This type of local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in glaring disparities 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 LGBTQ youth, and presents further challenges in ensuring that low

income districts have access to the resources needed to implement comprehensive sex education. While many schools often reach out to Local Public Health Units, some of which are Title X clinics, to provide sex education, some districts rely entirely on abstinence-only programming. Advocates report that the biggest barrier is a lack of information regarding sex education, largely fueled by misinformation spread by opposition groups such as the Concerned Women of America and the Family Policy Alliance of North Dakota.

Right now, advocates can take action to address these barriers and improve access to sex education for young people in their district. Advocates can contact their schools to determine what topics are missing from sex education curriculum, such as information on sexual orientation and gender identity or consent. Advocates can also ensure that sex education curriculum is culturally responsive to the needs of youth of color and Native youth in particular. Advocates can then vocalize the urgent 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 North Dakota...

State Law: A Closer Look

As a result of [North Dakota Century Code Title 15.1-21-24](#), beginning July 1, 2012, every school district, both public and non-public, is required to include instruction on abstinence in its health education curriculum. Each school district needs to ensure that the portion of its health curriculum related to sexual health includes instruction pertaining to “the risks associated with adolescent sexual activity and the social, psychological, and physical health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity before and outside of marriage.”

State Standards

The [North Dakota Health Education Content Standards](#), published by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, establish benchmarks for health instruction at all grade levels. For example, in grades 3-5, students are expected to be able to “Explain the stages of social, emotional, physical, and mental growth and development in humans from infancy to late adulthood,” including puberty. The standards address “sexual behavior” beginning in grade 6. The alignment of a school district’s health curriculum with the 2018 *North Dakota Health Education Content Standards* is intended to be used as assurance that schools are in compliance with the law.

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. **North Dakota’s 2023 legislative session convenes January 3, 2023.**

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

North Dakota 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 North Dakota as reported for the 2019–2020 school year.

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 12.4% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 23.4% of North Dakota 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

- 75% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 72.7% of North Dakota 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

- 68.6% of North Dakota 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.
- 70.7% of North Dakota 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

- 73.1% of North Dakota 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.
- 77.7% of North Dakota 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

- 62.7% of North Dakota 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.
- 70% of North Dakota 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

- 17.7% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 32.7% of North Dakota 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

- 46.4% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 54.9% of North Dakota 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 sexual orientation and gender identity

- 40.9% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students about sexual orientation and gender identity in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 50.5% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students about sexual orientation and gender identity 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

- 48.7% of North Dakota secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 59% of North Dakota 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

- 44.7% of North Dakota 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](#).

