

State Profiles

West Virginia State Profile



West Virginia's State of Sex Ed

While schools in West Virginia **are** required to teach sex education, they establish their own standards for curriculum. Because HIV/AIDS is the only mandatory topic that sex education must cover, curriculum varies greatly across the state and even within districts.

[Download Scorecard](#)



Sex Ed Requirements



Sex Ed Content



Overall State Policy Grade

[State Profile](#) [Current Requirement](#) [Recent Legislation](#) [More on Sex Ed](#)

Current Requirement

- West Virginia schools are required to teach sex education; however, curriculum standards vary by school.
- Curriculum must include instruction on abstinence.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians may remove their children from any part of this instruction by written notification to the principal. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.
- West Virginia has no regulation on medically accurate sex education.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

West Virginia advocates have worked hard to advance local access to sex education in recent years. Despite repeated legislative efforts to limit access to reproductive health care services, including abortion, and attempts to ban sex education, advocates have continued to successfully defend against such attacks in the state. Most recently, Representative Joe Jefferies introduced [House Bill 4153](#) in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to forbid displays related to sexuality in public schools and, alarmingly, prohibit teaching sex education.

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 sex education.

While some districts, such as Raleigh County, have successfully implemented sex education, others continue to fail to provide substantial instruction. Students

report that the curriculum often lacks information about contraceptive options. Advocates report that the lack of a consistent implementation process and formal educator training for sex education instruction are among the biggest barriers to quality sex education for young people in West Virginia.

Right now, advocates can take action to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After identifying what topics are missing from local sex education requirements, advocates can vocalize the importance of implementing specific elements such as trauma informed, culturally responsive curriculum that addresses the needs of youth of color and LGBTQ young people, expansive instruction on contraceptive options, and consent. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of comprehensive sex education. For a current overview of pending legislation, see table below. Advocates are also encouraged to contact their representatives and discuss the critical need for advanced sex education policies in West Virginia schools. 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 West Virginia...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

West Virginia law ([West Virginia Code §18-2-9](#)) requires “course curriculum requirements and materials [to] be adopted by the state board by rule in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Resources.” This means all school districts must adhere to the *West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Wellness Education*. [West Virginia Code §18-2-9](#) also requires human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention education within the general health education curriculum in grades 6–12. According to the West Virginia Board of Education’s AIDS Education Policy [2422.4](#), “[t]he goal of this policy is to assist in the protection of students by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to avoid behaviors that will put them at the risk of infection with [HIV].”

Each county board must integrate HIV prevention education into health courses and may also include it in “science, social studies, and developmental guidance” courses in order to “assure total understanding of the disease and its consequences.” Educators conducting classroom instruction about HIV/AIDS must be qualified professionals who participate in staff development to ensure they teach current AIDS information.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from any part of this instruction by written notification to the principal. **This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.**

State Standards

West Virginia does not require any specific curriculum; however, the Board of Education’s *West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Wellness Education* curriculum framework includes sexual health. The standards include discussion on communicable disease prevention and transmission, including HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), the functions of the reproductive system, and “factors that lead to teen pregnancy” as well as methods to prevent pregnancy.

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. **West Virginia’s 2023 annual session convenes on January 11, 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 West Virginia's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#). At the time of publication, the 2021 YRBS data was not made available yet.

West Virginia School Health Profiles Data

In 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the 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 West Virginia as reported for the 2019–2020 school year.

Reported teaching all 22 critical sexual health education topics

- 27.1% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students all 22 critical sexual health education topics in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 61.7% of West Virginia 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

- 80.3% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students about the benefits of being sexually abstinent in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 100% of West Virginia 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

- 75.8% of West Virginia 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% of West Virginia 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

- 82.2% of West Virginia 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.
- 97.4% of West Virginia 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

- 70.5% of West Virginia 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.
- 97.4% of West Virginia 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

- 35.6% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students how to correctly use a condom in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 70.4% of West Virginia 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

- 62.6% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students about methods of contraception other than condoms in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 83.4% of West Virginia 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

- 40.6% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students about sexual orientation in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 71.8% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students about sexual orientation 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

- 51.6% of West Virginia secondary schools taught students about gender roles and stereotypes in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8.
- 83% of West Virginia 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

- 43.3% of West Virginia 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](#).

