



Alabama State of Sex Ed

Sex education is not required in Alabama schools, but HIV/STI education is. Instruction must be medically accurate and age-appropriate. Instruction on contraception must be included if sex education is taught, but abstinence must be stressed.



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Current Requirement

- Alabama students in grades 5-12 are required to receive instruction on HIV/AIDS through a health education program.
- If a school chooses to teach sex education, the curriculum must emphasize abstinence.
- If sex education is being taught, Alabama requires it to be medically accurate and developmentally appropriate.
- Alabama statute does not require that sex education include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- There is no requirement to teach about consent.
- Parents or guardians can remove their children from sex education. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

In 2021, sex education advocates helped pass [House Bill 385](#), which updated Alabama’s sex education curriculum requirements to make them more inclusive. Introduced by Representative Laura Hall , it requires sex education instruction to be medically accurate, removing the requirement for materials to highlight stigmatizing and false information about LGBTQIA+ identities, and shifts instruction from an emphasis on self-control and ethical behavior

to an emphasis on the importance of delaying sexual activity and discouraging risky sexual behavior. Since the passage of HB 385, Alabama is experiencing a wave of attacks on sex education, LGBTQIA+ youth rights, and factual and honest history curriculum.

While House Bill 385 represents a strong step towards advancing sex education, state advocates in Alabama have reported that educators often lack information concerning the state's sex education policy and are afraid of implementing the wrong curriculum. As a result, many opt to not provide any sex education at all. This failure in implementing HB 385 uniformly contributes to pre-existing disparities in adverse health outcomes that disproportionately harm Alabama's most at-risk population groups. Advocates across the state report that inclusive, evidence-based, and culturally responsive information are among the biggest factors missing from Alabama's sex education curriculum, even after the passage of House Bill 385.

In 2024, Alabama advocates narrowly defeated [HB 195](#), introduced by Representative Susan Dubose, which would have required all sex education to emphasize only "sexual risk avoidance", or abstinence-until-marriage, and prohibit instruction on all pregnancy outcomes including abortion. This bill would be especially harmful to partners in Alabama providing comprehensive sex education under the guise of prohibiting organizations that don't prescribe sexual risk avoidance or endorse abortion.

In 2025, [similar legislation](#) has been reintroduced to restrict sex education to stigmatizing and inaccurate sexual risk avoidance programming. Additionally, there has been an increase in state legislation targeted LGBTQIA+ students, especially transgender students after the passage of [HB 322](#) (2022), a "[bathroom ban](#)" bill which also limits classroom discussion on sexual orientation and gender identity, and SB 184 (2022), a [medical care ban](#) for minors. Advocates expect continued aggressive legislative attacks on sexual and reproductive rights in a state that has typically introduced and passed legislation that allows for the mistreatment of transgender youth and their families, as well as banning access to abortion care.

To advance sex education, advocates report a need for support in defending against oppositional attacks attempting to overturn the progress of HB 385 and more collaboration between current state partners. There is also a need

for increased public awareness about misinformation, or disinformation, about sex education and sexual and reproductive health services. Additional funding for sex education programming and teacher training has also been identified as significant barriers in advancing sex education.

Right now, advocates can take action in their communities to address misinformation about Alabama's sex education requirements. They can contact their local board of education and determine what topics are missing from existing sex education curricula. Advocates can then 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 LGBTQIA+ youth, or medically accurate instruction on contraceptives, healthy relationships, and consent. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Alabama's 2025-2026 legislative session convenes February 4th, 2025 and is expected to adjourn on May 15th, 2025.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for a statewide sex education mandate. Advocates are encouraged to use the [Community Action Toolkit](#) to guide local efforts to advance sex education. For more information on getting involved in local and state advocacy for sex education, reach out to our State Policy Action Manager, Miranda Estes (mestes@siecus.org)

More on sex ed in Alabama...

State Law: A Closer Look

Alabama state law does not require the teaching of sex education. However, a [resolution](#) adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education in 1987 does require that students in grades 5–12 receive instruction about HIV/AIDS through a [health education](#) program. Should schools choose to offer additional sex education, [Alabama State Code Section 16-40A-2](#) sets minimum requirements for what must be taught, but specific content is

developed locally. In 2021, the [passage of House Bill 385](#) amended some of these requirements as shown below. Among other things, the code requires “sex education or the human reproductive process” programs or curricula to include and emphasize that:

1. abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only completely effective protection against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and AIDS when transmitted sexually.
2. abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of lawful marriage is the expected social standard for unmarried school-age persons.

The code also states that:

1. course materials and instruction that relate to sexual education or STDs should be age-appropriate and medically accurate ;
2. course materials and instruction that relate to sexual education or STDs should include:
 - a. “An emphasis on sexual abstinence as the only completely reliable method of avoiding unintended teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and infections.
 - b. The emphasis shall be on the importance of delaying sexual activity and discouraging risky sexual behavior.
 - c. Statistics based on the latest medical information that indicates the degree of reliability and unreliability of various forms of contraception, while also emphasizing the increase in protection against pregnancy and protection against STDs, including HIV and AIDS, afforded by the use of various contraceptive measures”

Additionally, the code states: “(d) Parents or guardians shall be given advanced, written notification of the teaching of any sex education or of the human reproductive process. Upon request and prior to distribution to students, the school shall make available to parents or guardians the sex education curriculum.” There is no requirement on parental consent prior to enrollment in sex education. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

In 2022, [House Bill 322](#) was enacted and now restricts classroom discussion on sexual orientation and gender identity, unless it is considered “age

appropriate and developmentally appropriate in accordance with state standards” ([AL Code § 16-40A-5](#)).

State Standards

In addition to this code, the 2019 [Alabama Course of Study: Health Education](#) provides the foundation for the minimum content requirements for topics such as HIV, STIs, and pregnancy prevention. The sexuality topics covered include: “societal expectations of remaining abstinent until married,” the “physical, social, and emotional effects,” of STIs, disease transmission, responsible decision-making, and refusal skills, among others. These standards have not been updated since the passage of [House Bill 385 \(2021\)](#) and thus do not reflect recent requirements such as being medically accurate or removing stigmatizing language about LGBTQIA+ relationships.

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. In recent years, there has been an increase in legislative attacks on the implementation of CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) which [tracks six categories of health risk behaviors](#) including sexual health behaviors. **To learn more about Alabama's 2021 YRBS results, [click here](#). As of 2023, Alabama [no longer participates](#) in data collection for YRBS.**

Alabama School Health Profiles Data

In 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the 2022 [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. **However, Alabama did not participate in 2022 and therefore was excluded from the 2022 School Health Profiles Report.**

Visit the CDC's [*School Health Profiles*](#) 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](#).