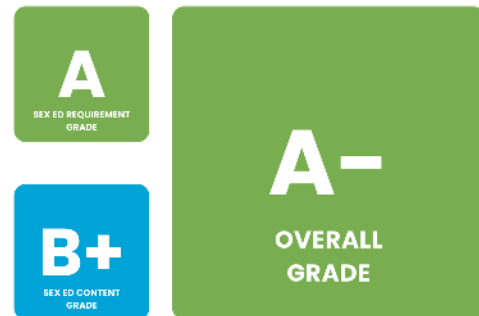




California State of Sex Ed

Comprehensive sex education is required through the California Healthy Youth Act, which requires instruction on contraception, STI/HIV, and healthy relationships. California also recently mandated instruction on menstrual health for all students.

[View Bill Tracker](#)



Current Requirement

- California schools are required to teach sex education.
 - Sex education instruction must be comprehensive.
 - Curriculum must include information on abstinence.
 - Sex education instruction must be medically accurate.
- Curriculum must be culturally competent for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities, include instruction on gender identity and expression, and when providing examples of relationships and couples, include examples of same-sex relationships.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent. However, curriculum must include instruction that provides students with “knowledge and skills they need to form healthy relationships that are based on mutual respect and affection, and are free from violence, coercion, and intimidation.” The updated [Health Education Curriculum Framework](#) also includes instruction on affirmative consent.
- Curriculum must also include instruction on menstrual health education as of September 2024.
- Parents or guardians can remove their children from sex education instruction or STI/HIV education classes. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

While California remains one of the few states leading the country with a sex education mandate, there is still work to be done and advocates are currently working to increase funding for improved professional development opportunities for those teaching sex education.

In 2023, several strides were made to protect student access to affirming education and resources. CA Assembly Bill [1078](#) ensured that books can only be removed from libraries with the approval of the state board. Additionally, it ensured that when instructional materials are approved, they include the contributions of people of all gender expressions and are representative of California's diversity. Student access to inclusive materials, including both sex education and library books, ensures that students can access information for a holistic education. Recent attempts to ban books that discuss LGBTQIA+ identity, or other “divisive topics,” intersect with attempts to ban access to sexual health information.

The 2024 legislative session included several positive additions to required curriculum through the CHYA, including relationship and intimate partner violence resources (via [Assembly Bill 2053](#)), menstrual health education (via [Assembly Bill 2229](#)), and instruction on “sextortion” prevention through videos and online images (via [Assembly Bill 2932](#)).

Despite these successes, California has experienced some of the wave of coordinated state legislation attacking sex education and other inclusive programs in schools. During this current legislative session, [Assembly Bill 281](#) has moved towards passage, and would amend CHYA to allow for parents to inspect instructional materials and then make copies of materials. This would not only add administrative hurdles for teachers, administrators and staff, but add to overall unnecessary bureaucracy for public education. Parental review of curriculum already exists through current CA law via the state’s opt-out policy, and these attempts to increase parental oversight represent an ongoing trend of parental rights weaponized to restrict public education.

Currently, advocates report implementation of existing law, lack of funding to support training for educators, and the lack of broad health education requirements all continue to create barriers to sex education for young people in California. Additionally, advocates report an increased need to address the

myths and concerns associated with sex education. While sex education is mandated statewide, it is reported that more rural and low-income communities continue to lack support in implementing curriculum. A [2024 report](#) developed by Equality California made several recommendations to support students and staff, including increased support for districts in tracking and reporting bullying, increased support for LGBTQAI+ educators, greater support, resources, and inclusive curriculum for LGBTQAI+ students, and monitoring and accountability for all policies. Despite the overwhelming support for sex education in California schools, there has been a notable uptick in opposition attempting to restrict sex education in specific counties, including Orange County and Riverside. Advocates also report a significant rise in opposition at the local school board level to implement sex education, particularly to LGBTQAI+-inclusive or historically accurate content. In addition to implementation challenges, advocates are continuously fighting efforts to roll back existing legislation especially in the area of “parental permission.”

Right now, advocates can take action in their communities to address misinformation about California’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, as well as policies that uphold the implementation of CHYA in all schools. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **California’s 2025-2026 legislative session convened December 2nd, 2024 and is expected to adjourn on November 30th, 2026.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for a statewide sex education mandate. Advocates are encouraged to use the SIECUS 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 California...](#)

State Law: A Closer Look

[California Education Code § 51933-51934](#), known as the California Healthy Youth Act, requires school districts to ensure that all students in grades 7–12 receive sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention education at least once in middle school and once in high school. It also mandates that the curricula be age-appropriate, medically accurate, objective, and “appropriate for use with pupils of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds; pupils with disabilities; and English learners.” The law further requires instruction to teach students about gender, gender expression, gender identity, and gender stereotypes.

Schools can elect to offer sex education earlier than grade 7, in which case they must adhere to the same requirements. No program may “promote or teach religious doctrine,” instruction must encourage parent-child communication about sexuality, and instruction must “provide information about the effectiveness and safety of all Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved contraceptive methods in preventing pregnancy, including, but not limited to, emergency contraception.” Parents or guardians may remove their children from sex education and/or sexually transmitted infection (STI)/HIV education classes.

In 2018, California enacted three pieces of legislation that impact sex education. [Ch. 428](#) allows school districts to provide an optional component of sex education instruction on the potential risks and consequences of creating and sharing sexually suggestive or explicit materials through cell phones and digital media. [Ch. 807](#) requires the already-mandated information about human trafficking in sex education instruction to further include information on how social media and mobile devices are used for human trafficking. [Ch. 495](#) extends California’s Healthy Youth Act to charter schools, requiring them to provide sexual health education in grades 7–12.

In 2024, several pieces of legislation were passed, adding required topics to the implementation of sex education. Schools are now required to include resources for abusive relationships and intimate partner violence, such as hotlines, via the passage of [Assembly Bill 2053](#). [Assembly Bill 2932](#) also required schools to educate students on ways to prevent “sextortion,” or the use of sexual images or videos to threaten or coerce. [Assembly Bill 2229](#)

added required instruction on menstrual health education and related topics such as pain management, hygiene, and menstrual disorders.

State Standards

The [Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve](#), with a [new version](#) that was set to be released in 2020 but has yet to come out, and [Health Education Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve](#) provide guidance for human sexuality instruction curriculum. Sexual Health instruction must be included in grades 7–12, but, starting in grade 6, students must learn how to “object appropriately to teasing or bullying of peers that is based on personal characteristics, spiritual beliefs, gender, gender expression, and sexual orientation.” School districts, however, are not required to adopt these content standards.

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. Outside of school districts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Oakland, California no longer participates in YRBS data collection and instead administers their own state-based survey [California Healthy Kids Survey](#). **To view upcoming 2021-2023 results from the survey, [click here](#). To learn more about 2023 YRBS data from San Francisco Unified School District, Los Angeles Unified School District, San Diego Unified School District, and Oakland Unified School District, visit the [YRBS explorer tool](#).**

California 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. **To view California's results from the 2022 School Health Profiles Survey, visit CDC's [School Health Profiles Explorer tool](#).** However, California's 2022 data was not weighted to be representative of its sample 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](#).