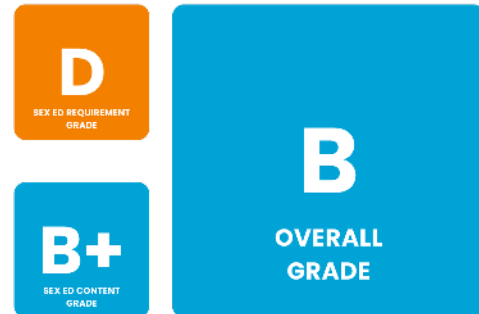




Colorado State of Sex Ed

Sex education is not required in Colorado. When sex ed is offered, it must be age-appropriate, evidence-based, culturally responsive, and medically accurate. When sex ed is offered, it must include HIV/STIs, sexual orientation, gender identity, contraception, consent, and detailed healthy relationships education. Classrooms are only required to cover abstinence if sex ed is offered, but it must not be stressed as a primary or sole method of prevention. Curriculum is not required to meet the National Sex Education Standards by law.



[View Bill Tracker](#)

Current Requirement

- Colorado schools are **not** required to teach sex education.
 - If sex education is offered, then the curriculum must be comprehensive as defined by the law.
 - If sex education is offered, curriculum must “not emphasize sexual abstinence as the primary or sole acceptable preventative method available to students.”
- If sex education is offered, curriculum must not exclude the health needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex individuals.
- If sex education is offered, curriculum must include instruction on consent.
- If pregnancy options are taught, abortion must be included as an option for pregnancy.

- Parents or guardians can remove their children from sex education instruction with written notification. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.
- If sex education is offered, the curriculum must be medically accurate, culturally responsive, and age-appropriate.
- Parents/caregivers have the opportunity to review curricula prior to instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates have worked diligently to advance and maintain sex education in Colorado. [Colorado Statute §25-44-102](#), enacted in 2013, established the grant program for comprehensive sex education. Schools that accept this state funding must use a curriculum that is age-appropriate, culturally relevant, medically accurate, and based in science. HB19-1032, enacted in 2019, adds [Colorado Statute §22-1-128](#) and states that education, if taught, must also be “evidence-based, culturally sensitive, and reflective of positive youth development guidelines” to incorporate students of all backgrounds and identities. This act requires consent to be taught, removes the emphasis on abstinence and the use of shame-based language, and prohibits the exclusion of the health needs of LGBTQIA+ students. The bill also amended the grant program to require an annual report on the outcomes of the program, prioritize grants for rural school districts that currently do not offer sexuality education, and improve diversity on the oversight committee for the program. In 2022, [House Bill 22-1136](#), was introduced in an effort to require schools to show a five-minute high-definition ultrasound video of the development of a fetus over time. While this legislation was ultimately unsuccessful, it represents the intersection between attacks on both abortion care and sex education that is reflective of Colorado’s current legislative landscape.

In recent years, Colorado has also taken legislative action to protect student well-being in various sectors. In 2024, the legislature passed [House Bill 24-1136](#), also known as the “Healthier Social Media Use by Youth” Act, which required the creation of evidence-based, research-based, and promising program materials and curricula pertaining to the mental health impacts of social media use by youth. In this current legislative session, the Kelly Loving Act or [House Bill 25-1312](#), was signed into law on April 16, 2025. This bill adds

protections for trans and gender-nonconforming people in Colorado, and specifically updates inclusive policies for trans students around the use of chosen names and school dress codes—creating a more inclusive and affirming learning environment for all students.

Since Colorado schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide if they will provide youth with sex education that follows the updated statute. Local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity regarding the quality of sex education that students receive.

Right now, advocates can take action in their communities to ensure equitable access to sex education across Colorado. They can contact their local board of education to ensure sex education is being taught according to standards in ways that are inclusive of youth of color and LGBTQIA+ youth, or advocate for it to be implemented if not already. If their local school district is currently not teaching sex education, advocates can push for it to be taught. Advocates are also encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Colorado's 2025-2026 legislative session convened January 8th, 2025, and adjourned on May 7th, 2025.**

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 Colorado...

State Law: A Closer Look

Colorado state law does not require schools to provide sex or HIV instruction; however, it refers to “medically and scientifically accurate information” as a “right” of youth in [Colorado statute §22-1-128](#). Statute mandates that all school districts that offer human sexuality instruction must provide comprehensive

and medically accurate information. This constitutes an “if/then” policy which means that IF sex education is taught in schools, then it must meet state specified requirements according to law. However, because it does not mandate sex education, local jurisdictions are still able to decide whether to provide sex education at all. In Colorado, curricula must include medically accurate, culturally sensitive information about methods to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and must include information about abstinence, all FDA approved forms of contraception, and be taught in a “cohesive, integrated, objective manner” so that youth are empowered to make decisions based on their “individual needs, beliefs, and values.”

Additional requirements state that if provided, the instruction must promote the development of healthy relationships through providing instruction on:

1. How to communicate consent, recognize the withdrawal of consent, and understand the age of consent
2. How to avoid making unwanted sexual advances or assuming a person's supposed sexual intentions based on a person's appearance or sexual history
3. Age appropriate information on “Safe Haven Laws” relating to the safe abandonment of newborn children
4. All pregnancy outcomes, including abortion, if the school district opts to provide instruction on pregnancy outcome options

In addition, sex education instruction must not:

1. Explicitly or implicitly teach or endorse religious ideology
2. Use shame-based or stigmatizing language or instructional tools
3. Emphasize abstinence as the primary or sole preventative method
4. Rely on gender stereotypes
5. Exclude the health needs of intersex individuals or LGBTQIA+ individuals

Parents or guardians must be notified if a sex education course is taught, and they must be given an opportunity to review the curriculum. They may

remove their children from sex education or STI/HIV education classes by sending written notice to the school. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

Per [Colorado statute §22-25-104](#), the Colorado Department of Education is responsible for providing guidelines as to the length of courses, the subjects included, and the manner in which these subjects are addressed.

In 2013, the state legislature established a grant program for comprehensive human sex education, via [Colorado statute §25-44-102](#). Schools that accept this funding must use curricula that are age appropriate, culturally relevant, medically accurate, and are based in science. In 2019, the state legislature amended the statute to ensure that the grant program’s oversight entity is made up of a diverse population of community members. The amendment also instructed that rural public schools and schools that do not currently offer sex education take priority during the grant recipient selection process.

State Standards

The Department of Education provides guidelines on curriculum development through the [Colorado Academic Standards: Comprehensive Health Standards](#). Sexual health topics—including HIV and other STD transmission and prevention, unintended pregnancy, abstinence, and sexual assault—are components of these 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. Colorado does not participate in the YRBS, however, administers its own Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS). **To learn more about Colorado’s 2023 HKCS results, [click here](#).**

Colorado 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. **Colorado did not participate in the 2018, 2020, or 2022 survey.**

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](#).