



## Illinois State of Sex Ed

Sex education is not required, but instruction on HIV/AIDS is. Health education must instruct on human growth and development, assault prevention, and sexual abstinence. However, IF sex education is taught then it must be comprehensive due to the passage of their Healthy Youth Act. If taught it must be medically accurate, age appropriate, evidence based and must adhere to the National Sex Education Standards.



[View Bill Tracker](#)

### Current Requirement

- Illinois schools are not required to teach sex education. However they are required to teach SOME sexual health concepts under required health education
  - Health education must include instruction on human growth and development, family life, sexual abstinence, disease prevention, and AIDS prevention.
  - If schools choose to teach sex education, however, it is required to include instruction that is age and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, culturally appropriate, inclusive, trauma-informed, evidence-based or evidence-informed, and aligns with the [National Sex Education Standards](#).
- If sex education is taught, the curriculum is required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- If sex education is taught, the curriculum must include instruction on consent and healthy relationships.

- Parents or guardians may remove their children from any or all sex education, family life programs, and/or STD/human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention programs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

## RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates in Illinois successfully passed [Senate Bill 818](#), also known as the Healthy Youth Act, in 2021 and continue to work to advance sex education policy in the state. This law states that if sex education is offered in schools in grades K through 12, educators must teach comprehensive instruction that is age, culturally, and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, inclusive, trauma-informed, and replicates evidence-based or evidence-informed programs. Further, curriculum MUST align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). Unfortunately, this law is not a mandate and as a result adoption of sex education in schools has been sporadic and implementation is still a challenge in Illinois.

To assist in implementation, lawmakers have introduced countless bills to provide grants to local school districts and community organizations to assist them in teaching comprehensive sex education such as [Senate Bill 4049](#) (2022), [Senate Bill 1428/House Bill 3067](#) (2023), and [Senate Bill 3384](#) (2024). While these bills were ultimately unsuccessful, they emphasize the need for funding to aid Illinois schools in complying with the sex education law.

While lawmakers continue to work to advance sex education, they also have had to defend against numerous failed legislative attacks on existing policy. In 2022, the introduction of [House Bill 5349](#) and [5494](#) sought to change sex education from “opt out” to “opt in,” creating unnecessary barriers to receiving this critical instruction. In the 2023-2024 legislative session, [House Bill 3168](#) sought to further emphasize abstinence in sex education and stigmatize LGBTQIA+ relationships by instructing on “honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage”. Additionally, it would have required schools to teach “alternatives to abortion” to perpetuate abortion stigma.

In the current 2025-2026 session, SIECUS has not yet observed any anti-sex education bills; however, lawmakers instead are targeting abortion access for minors in Illinois, currently [a safe haven for abortion rights](#) in the Midwest,

through bills like [House Bill 1139](#), [House Bill 2624](#), and [House Bill 1336](#). Sex education instructs on all pregnancy outcomes, [including critical access to abortion care](#). Young people deserve to be able to access the reproductive health care they need to make decisions about their own bodies and lives.

Since Illinois schools are not mandated to provide sex education, school districts are left to decide whether they will provide sex education to youth or not.

Advocates report that since the passage of [Senate Bill 818](#), opposition groups such as Awake Illinois and Moms for Liberty have [attempted to counter the implementation of the National Sex Ed Standards](#) and stop schools from implementing the law through misinformation, bullying, and even at times threatening, local school and library boards. As a result of their efforts, many schools in Illinois have opted to not provide sex education altogether. This small but vocal minority are reported to focus their efforts largely on disrupting and seeking seats on school boards.

Students also report that for schools who do choose to teach sex education, adherence to the National Sex Education Standards [still may not be guaranteed](#) as the health education curriculum, under which sex education is taught, can be adjusted to give less time to the sexual health portion. Further the standards are guidance and not an example of curriculum; therefore, additional work is needed to help Illinois schools select appropriate and compliant sex education curricula.

Right now, advocates can take action to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. Particularly, advocates can invest in local school board races to elect strong advocates who support sex education. Advocates can also contact their local school board to determine whether or not sex education is being taught and how to bring it in alignment with the Healthy Youth Act. They can then vocalize the important need for advancing instruction requirements and defend against the spread of misinformation/disinformation in their community. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Illinois's 2025-2026 legislative session convenes January 8th, 2025 and adjourns January 3rd, 2026.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the critical need for a statewide sex education mandate so that comprehensive sex education must be taught in all Illinois schools. 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](mailto:mestes@siecus.org))

## **More on sex ed in Illinois...**

### **State Law: A Closer Look**

The [Illinois Critical Health Problems and Comprehensive Health Education Act](#) (105 ILCS 110) states that the following topics must be addressed in all elementary and secondary schools:

*[H]uman ecology and health, human growth and development; the emotional, psychological, physiological, hygienic, and social responsibilities of family life, including sexual abstinence until marriage; [and the] prevention and control of disease, including instruction in grades 6 through 12 on the prevention, transmission, and spread of [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] AIDS.*

This instruction is explicitly differentiated from sex education by the following [Illinois Administrative Code Section 1.420 - Basic Standards](#):

*"2) Nothing in this Section shall be construed as requiring or preventing the establishment of classes or courses in comprehensive sex education or family life education as authorized by Sections 27-9.1 and 27-9.2 of the School Code."*

In 2021, Senate Bill 818, enrolled as [Public Act 102-0522](#), requires schools that offer sex education to teach comprehensive sex education that is age, culturally, and developmentally appropriate, medically accurate, complete, inclusive, trauma-informed, and replicates evidence-based or evidence-informed programs. Further, instruction must align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). 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.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from any or all sex education, family life programs, and/or STD/human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention programs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

## State Standards

As a requirement of [Public Act 102-0522](#), the State Board of Education must develop learning standards for sex education that are in accordance with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). As of July 13th, 2022, the National Sex Education Standards are the [new Illinois learning standards](#) for sexual health education and schools teaching sex education must use these standards to guide curriculum development.

## 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 Illinois' 2023 YRBS results, [click here](#).** In 2023, Illinois only participated in high school YRBS data collection, not middle school.

## Illinois 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 Illinois's results from the 2022 School Health Profiles Survey, visit CDC's [School Health Profiles Explorer](#) tool.**

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](#).**