



Maine State of Sex Ed

Sex education, also known as "comprehensive family life education" is required to be taught as a part of health education in Maine. Instruction is opt-out and must include family planning, STI prevention, healthy relationships, communication, contraception, and decision-making. Instruction must emphasize abstinence when promoting "responsible sexual behavior". Instruction on consent is also required. There is no requirement on SOGI or to be inclusive or evidence-based in statutes.



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Current Requirement

- “Comprehensive family life education” is required to be taught in Maine schools as a part of health education
 - Curriculum must include family planning, HIV/STI prevention, healthy relationships, contraception, and more.
 - Curriculum must emphasize abstinence.
- Curriculum is **not required** to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is required to include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians may remove their children from “comprehensive family life education” classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.
- “Comprehensive family life education” must be medically accurate.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Since the [2019 passage of Legislative Document 773](#) which requires schools in Maine to instruct on consent, there has been some movement to improve sex education standards through bills like [Legislative Document 254](#) (2023-2024). Initially introduced to update standards for sex education and consent education, the bill was amended to [require increased funding](#) to implement the comprehensive family life curriculum (\$500,000). This bill ultimately failed to pass but it showcases the need for increased funding to be able to effectively implement policies requiring sex education to be taught.

Advocates must also continue their efforts to support schools in implementing advanced curriculum that is inclusive of the needs of all students, especially LGBTQIA+ students [amidst growing opposition](#). In fact, in 2023, opposition lawmakers in Maine introduced at **least eight bills** targeting LGBTQIA+ students and emphasizing “parental rights.”

Beyond sex education, Maine has taken significant steps to protect access to abortion care and gender affirming care for minors, in sharp contrast to trends seen across the rest of the country. In 2024, advocates celebrated the passage of [Legislative Document 227](#) which created a “[shield law](#)” to protect parents of minors accessing gender affirming care and medical providers offering abortion care or gender affirming care to patients from hostile states. In the current session, [Legislative Document 380](#) seeks to undermine and repeal these protections; but has not yet been successful. While these are important steps in protecting human rights, sex education does not exist in a vacuum and is necessary to ensure there is expanded access to sexual and reproductive health care services including [abortion](#) and gender affirming care for young people.

While Maine schools are required to teach sex education, curriculum is not required to align with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). Curriculum must include medically accurate instruction that emphasizes abstinence while also instructing on healthy relationships, contraception, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and conflict resolution. However, curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity, and is not required to be culturally responsive to the needs of young people of color.

Local school boards are largely responsible for establishing further curriculum requirements. Local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity 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 LGBTQAI+ youth, and presents further challenges in ensuring that low income districts have access to the resources needed to implement sex education.

Right now, advocates can take action to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After contacting their local schools, advocates can determine what topics are currently missing from the sex education curriculum, such as instruction on topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Maine's 2025-2026 legislative session convenes December 4th, 2024 and adjourns May 8th, 2026.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the need for strengthening the quality of sex education by making it LGBTQIA+ inclusive and evidence-based in Maine. Advocates can also discuss the critical need for increased funding to support schools in implementing the current sex education requirements. 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 Maine...

State Law: A Closer Look

Maine Revised Statutes Annotated Title 22, §§ 1902 and 1910 mandate that the state's Department of Health and Human Services “undertake initiatives to implement effective, comprehensive family life education services.” The state must provide:

- Training for teachers, parents, and community members in the development and implementation of comprehensive family life education curriculum;
- Resource staff persons to provide expert training, curriculum development, and implementation and evaluation services on a statewide basis;
- Funding to promote and coordinate community youth forums in communities identified as having high needs for comprehensive family life education;
- Funding for issue management and policy development training for school boards, superintendents, principals, and administrators; and
- Funding for grants to school-based comprehensive family life education programs to recognize outstanding performance and share strategies for success.

Comprehensive family life education is defined as being taught in kindergarten through grade 12. The information provided must be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and to respect community values and encourage parent-child communication. Programs must emphasize abstinence and instruct on healthy relationships, contraception and family planning, STDS, affirmative consent, and conflict resolution.

In 2019, the state passed Legislative Directive 773, amends Maine Revised Statutes Annotated [Title 20 §4723](#) and requires instruction on affirmative consent in schools.

According to [Maine Revised Statutes Annotated Title 22 §1911](#), parents or guardians may remove their children from “comprehensive family life education” classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

State Standards

[Maine’s Health Education Standards](#) guide curricula development and are based on the National Health Education Standards. These performance standards, however, do not explicitly mention sexual health education and only refer to existing statutes while providing resources on the department

website to support schools with curriculum development. Maine's Health Education Standards are set to be reviewed in 2025 and 2030.

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 Maine's 2023 YRBS results, [click here](#).** In 2023, Maine participated in high school and middle school YRBS data collection.

Maine 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 Maine'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](#).