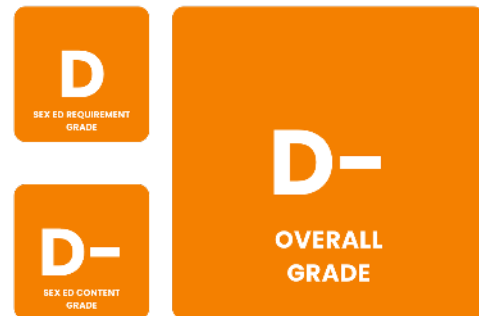




Massachusetts State of Sex Ed

Neither sex education nor HIV/STI education is required in Massachusetts. Decisions about whether and how to teach them are made at the local level. Like many states, Massachusetts operates under local control, but districts are not obligated to follow Board of Education policies regarding sex education. There are some policies for sex education advisory committees and who they may be composed of.



[View Bill Tracker](#)

Current Requirement

- Sex education is not required in Massachusetts schools
- There is no policy on instructing on abstinence, contraception, or STI prevention
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent or healthy relationships.
- Parents and guardians can exempt their children from any portion of sex education instruction through written notification to the school principal. **This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.**
- Massachusetts has no regulation regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates in Massachusetts have worked tirelessly to advance the Healthy Youth Act to address the lack of sex education policy in the Commonwealth. First introduced in 2011, the Healthy Youth Act would ensure youth receive research-based, medically accurate, and culturally competent sex education in districts that require sex education. Broad public support for the bill is often met with pushback from anti-sex education lawmakers and conservative community groups. While the Healthy Youth Act has successfully passed the Senate in the past legislative sessions, it has routinely been blocked from being introduced in the House, inevitably failing to pass the Massachusetts Legislature. In 2025, Senator Sal DiDomenico led the introduction of the latest iteration of the Healthy Youth Act, [Senate Bill 340](#).

While Massachusetts has not passed policy supporting sex education the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education updated the [Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework](#) to advance sex education standards and make the curriculum more comprehensive, inclusive, and closer in alignment with the [National Sex Education Standards](#) in September 2023 - a promising step forward to support the healthy development of for young people in Massachusetts

Even so, advocates must remain vigilant against attacks by anti-sex opponents to restrict access to sex education such as bills currently in the legislature like [House Bill 550](#) (2025) and [House Bill 551](#) (2025). Both these bills aim to require prior parental consent for either sex education or instruction in sexual orientation and gender identity, constituting [an opt-in policy](#). These bills add to past year's similar legislative attacks including **5 bills** to establish opt-in requirements for sex education in the 2023-2024 legislative session ([H 461](#), [H 462](#), [H 463](#), [H 509](#), [H 587](#)).

Since Massachusetts schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide what type of sex education—if any at all—they provide to youth. Local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity regarding the quality of sex education that students receive. “Abstinence-plus” instruction means that while abstinence is still emphasized, some information is also provided on contraceptive methods such as condoms. Such discretion allows for the implementation of policies and curriculum that stigmatize marginalized youth, such as students of color and LGBTQAI+ youth.

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 whether or not sex education is being taught and if the curriculum is in alignment with updated state standards. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Massachusetts's 2025-2026 two-year legislative session convenes January 1st, 2025 and adjourns January 1st, 2027.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the need for strengthening the quality of sex education by signing onto the most recent Healthy Youth Act bill. 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 Massachusetts...

State Law: A Closer Look

Massachusetts does not require sex education but instead allows local school boards to make such decisions. If a community decides to implement sex education, [General Law of Massachusetts, Chapter 71 §38O](#) requires that standards be developed with the guidance of community stakeholders, including parents and at least one physician.

[General Law of Massachusetts, Chapter 71 Section 32A](#) states that every district implementing or maintaining curriculum which primarily involves human sexual education or human sexuality issues is required to adopt a policy ensuring parental/guardian notification. This policy must afford parents or guardians the flexibility to exempt their children from any portion of said curriculum through written notification to the school principal.

State Standards

The *Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Framework*, updated in 2023, suggests that curricula include standards grouped under several topic areas including healthy relationships and sexual health. These K-12 standards were developed using resources including the *National Sexuality Education Standards*. Some of the relevant standards include teaching sexual assault/abuse prevention, the harms of gender stereotypes, interpersonal communication strategies for healthy relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, puberty, preventing sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, and more. These standards, however, are recommendations and not required to be implemented by local school districts.

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

Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts'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](#).