



Pennsylvania State of Sex Ed

Sex education is not required, but age-appropriate HIV/STI education is. No medical accuracy requirement. Some healthy relationships education is required, but not consent. HIV/STI education must stress abstinence and is not required to include instruction on contraception.



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Current Requirement

- Curriculum must stress abstinence.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.
- School districts must publicize the fact that parents and guardians can review all curriculum materials. Parents and guardians whose principles or religious beliefs conflict with instruction may excuse their children from the programs. **This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.**
- Pennsylvania has no regulation regarding medically accurate sex education instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Pennsylvania is one of the many states across the country where a Baby Olivia bill was introduced this legislative session, which requires the inclusion of a high definition fetal development video, generally supplemented by LiveAction’s “Meet Baby Olivia” video, and instruction in human sexuality

classrooms. This law, under the guise of human growth and development instruction, will ensure Pennsylvania classrooms receive anti-abortion misinformation and perpetuate abortion stigma. This bill, [House Bill 606](#) would specifically change Public School Code of 1949 and require all school entities in Pennsylvania to provide instruction on early human life development, including an ultrasound video that is at least five minutes long. The “Parental Rights in Education Act” ([House Bill 581](#)) was also introduced this session, and would prohibit instruction on sexuality or gender identity before 5th grade. The bill would also require schools to implement a parental notification procedure for any change in a student’s mental, physical, or emotional wellbeing. This dangerous legislation continues the trend of weaponizing “parental rights”, and has the potential to forcibly out students who come out as LGBTQIA+ in school—impacting not only their learning environment but also their wellbeing. As of May 2025, both of these bills have been introduced in the Pennsylvania legislature, but have not advanced any further.

In 2024, [Senate Bill 293](#) failed to pass the legislature after being rolled over from 2023, but would have required age-appropriate consent education for all K-12 students, including positive relationship examples inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations. In 2022, advocates in Pennsylvania also tried to advance several initiatives concerning sex education. [House Bill 2023](#), introduced by Representative Aaron Kaufer, sought to develop an age-appropriate behavioral health education program for K-12 students. Lastly, [House Bill 1335](#) was introduced and sought to require schools to provide sex education that covers a wide variety of topics and allows for parents to opt-out their child if they wish. Unfortunately, none of these sex education bills have passed, leaving Pennsylvania students without statewide sex education and access to inclusive, medically accurate, or comprehensive health information.

Sex education is not currently mandated in Pennsylvania. Schools that do teach sex education must emphasize abstinence. Because Pennsylvania 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 glaring disparities 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 LGBTQIA+ 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 in their communities to advocate for comprehensive sex education for all Pennsylvania students. They can contact their local board of education and determine what topics are missing from existing health curricula and advocate for the inclusion of sex education into academic standards. 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, or medically accurate instruction on contraceptives, healthy relationships, and consent. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education. **Pennsylvania's 2025-2026 legislative session convenes January 7th, 2025, 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 [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 Pennsylvania

State Law: A Closer Look

Schools in Pennsylvania are not required to teach sex education. [Pennsylvania Constitutional Statutes Title 22 § 4.29](#), however, require primary, intermediate, middle, and high schools to teach sexually transmitted disease (STD), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), education. Primary schools are allowed to omit instruction on the sexual methods of disease transmission. Schools must use materials that have been determined by the local school district to be age-appropriate, discuss prevention, and stress abstinence as “the only completely reliable means of preventing sexual transmission.”

School districts must publicize the fact that parents and guardians can review all curriculum materials. Parents and guardians whose principles or religious beliefs conflict with instruction may excuse their children from the programs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

State Standards

The state has created [the Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education](#), which include STD and HIV prevention education. All decisions regarding HIV prevention curricula and materials must be made by local school districts. State standards also state that starting in 9th grade, students must “analyze factors that impact growth and development between adolescence and adulthood” such as dating and relationships, peer pressure, interpersonal communication, abstinence, and HIV/STIs. School districts do not have to follow a specific curriculum, but they must use these standards as a framework for the development of their curricula.

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 Pennsylvania’s 2023 YRBS results, [click here](#).**

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania'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](#).