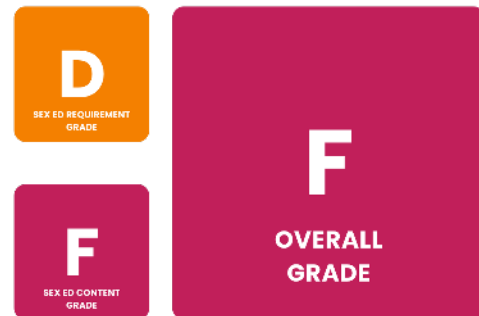




## Utah State of Sex Ed

Health education, which includes some concepts of sex education but is heavily abstinence-focused, is required. If sex education is taught, it must be opt-in. Must be medically accurate. May include instruction on contraception but it's not required.



[View Bill Tracker](#)

### Current Requirement

- Utah schools are required to teach health education, which includes some sexual health content.
  - Curriculum is required to include human development, communicable disease prevention, marriage and “safe dating practices”, and pregnancy prevention.
  - Curriculum stresses abstinence, and schools are not required to provide instruction on contraception.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent. However, the curriculum must include instruction on refusal skills.
- Parents or guardians must give written permission in order for a student to participate in any form of sex education. This is referred to as an “opt-in” policy.
- Curriculum must be medically accurate.

### RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

Advocates in Utah have continued to battle against attacks on already limited sex education requirements across the state over the past four years. Most recently, Governor Cox signed into law two bills that will have serious implications for sex education in Utah: [House Bill 281](#) and [House Bill 233](#). House Bill 281 does add required instruction on human development, marriage and safe dating practices, and sexual abuse prevention to health education but it also **doubles down on an abstinence-only approach** by instructing on “success sequencing”, [another term for abstinence-only-until-marriage instruction](#), and requiring schools that do choose to teach about contraception to emphasize failure rates and conflate it with abortion. [House Bill 233](#) further drops the quality of sex education by prohibiting abortion providers from teaching health education classes in Utah schools and prohibiting the use of any curricula developed by them. This severely restricts access to medically accurate and evidence-based sex education that is taught by trained experts in reproductive health. It also allows harmful entities like crisis pregnancy centers and/or conservative [faith-based entities to come in and provide inaccurate and shame-based instruction](#) on sexual health.

Beyond sex education, young Utahns have faced an increase in “parental rights” and anti-transgender legislative attacks, which have unfortunately been quite successful. In 2022, [House Bill 11](#) was enacted and restricts the participation of transgender girl athletes on interscholastic sports teams. 2023 was a particularly disastrous year with the passage of at least **4** anti-LGBTQIA+ youth legislation ([Senate Bill 16](#), [Senate Bill 100](#), [Senate Bill 93](#), and [House Bill 228](#)) and **3** “parental rights” bills ([House Bill 465](#), [House Bill 249](#), [House Bill 411](#)). These new laws include a gender affirming care ban, a [“forced outing”](#) bill, and an exemption for faith leaders to be able to give “conversion therapy” to minors. In 2024, Utah legislature went a step further with passing [House Bill 257](#) which restricts restroom and changing facilities access for transgender, non binary, and gender non conforming students in public schools.

In 2024, not only did Utah become a more hostile environment in the classroom and healthcare system for young people, but also, in digital spaces through the passage of laws restricting social media access for minors. Dangerous legislation that targets young people’s access online [under the guise of “digital safety”](#) can restrict their access to life-saving sexual health information or LGBTQIA+ resources. **Three bills** ([Senate Bill 194](#), [House Bill](#)

[464](#), and [Senate Bill 89](#)) were enacted into law last year that would impede social media usage for minors

While schools in Utah are required to teach health education, local Education Agencies (LEAs) establish their own standards for sex education in schools. 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 LGBTQIA+ youth, and presents further challenges in ensuring that low income districts have access to the resources needed to implement comprehensive sex education. A 2022 [poll](#) revealed that 62 percent of Utahns support offering sex education beyond abstinence-only curriculum, with more than half supporting comprehensive sex education. And yet, lawmakers continue to limit the instruction that students receive with hostile legislation.

Right now, advocates can take action by fighting back against recently passed anti-sex ed legislation to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After contacting their LEA, advocates can determine what topics are missing from health education, such as instruction on contraception as well as who is providing instruction. They can then vocalize the important need for advancing sex education requirements in their community. Advocates are encouraged to take action on pending legislation that seeks to advance or restrict the principles of sex education.

**Utah's 2025 legislative session convened January 21st, 2025, and adjourned March 7th, 2025.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the need for health education that is not centered on abstinence and provides medically accurate instruction on contraception in Utah. 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 Utah...**

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

Utah Code (§ 53G-10-402, Administrative Code §§ R277-474, and R277-700) mandates the State Board of Education to establish curriculum requirements for health education with the purpose of:

“(A)equipping students with practical safety skills regarding sexual abuse, trafficking, and harassment;

(B)promoting respect for humankind and individual responsibility;

(C)fostering character development and decision- making through the success sequence; and

(D)encouraging healthy personal and family relationships”

This instruction includes the following:

“(A)the success sequence;

(B)community and personal health, including personal hygiene and the prevention of communicable disease;

(C)physiology;

(D)human development;

(E)marriage and safe dating practices;

(F)refusal skills;

(G)resilience;

(H)situational awareness;

(I)the harmful effects of pornography; and

(J)the consequences of behaviors that pose a risk to individual health or of failure under the success sequence.”

This instruction must stress “the importance of abstinence from all sexual activity before marriage and fidelity after marriage as methods for “(A) maintaining mental, physical, and social health, including reducing stress; B) eliminating risks associated with sexual activity, including preventing pregnancy and certain communicable diseases; and C) achieving the success sequence”

Among other limitations on what can be taught, the Utah Code states that “[a]t no time may instruction be provided, including responses to spontaneous questions raised by students, regarding any means or methods that facilitate or encourage the violation of any state or federal criminal law by a minor or an adult.”

Utah Code further requires that materials used for instruction in health not include:

1. the intricacies of intercourse, sexual stimulation, or erotic behavior;
2. the advocacy of premarital or extra marital sexual activity; or
3. the advocacy or encouragement of the use of contraceptive methods or devices.

Utah code allows for instruction on contraception, but that cannot include discussion on “abortion or any abortive methods” and must stress “effectiveness, failure rates for youth, limitations, risks, and

information on state law applicable to minors obtaining contraceptive methods or devices.” Further, the state board cannot require instruction on contraception nor can instruction include a demonstration or depiction of how a contraceptive method is used.

Parents or guardians must give **written permission** in order for a student to participate in any form of sex education. **This is referred to as an “opt-in” policy.** Further, schools may not provide any instruction on sex that is not included in the current definition of “sex education” under [Utah Code Section 53G-10-403](#) as listed below -

- “(A)sexual abstinence;
- (B)human development, including puberty and maturation;
- (C)human reproductive processes, including conception, fetal development, pregnancy, and birth;
- (D) human reproductive anatomy; and physiology;
- (E)healthy dating practices, marriage, and parenthood, in accordance with the success sequence as defined in Section 53G-10-402;
- (F) adoption in accordance with Section 53G-10-404;
- (G)information about contraceptive methods or devices in accordance with Subsections 53G-10-402(2)(b) and ©;
- (H)chronic, infectious, and acute diseases and conditions of the reproductive system, including sexually transmitted infections and diseases; or
- (I)refusal skills, as defined in Section 53G-10-402

## **State Standards**

In the 2020-2021 school year, the [\*Utah Core State Standards for Health Education\*](#) were implemented in schools and outline standards related to sex education. Examples related to sexual health include: “Standard HI.HD.6: Identify practices for prevention of common sexually transmitted diseases/infections (STD/STI).”, “Standard HI.HD.8: Recognize characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.”, “Standard HII.HD.2: Define and describe the mental, emotional, physical, and social health benefits of sexual abstinence.”, and more. **Schools are not required to follow this framework.** The State Board of Education [\*further explains\*](#) that “Utah statute requires local education agencies (LEAs) to adopt curriculum for sex education for their

schools. Local board policies may include less than what the law allows but never more.”

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

## Utah 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 Utah'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](#).**