



Vermont State of Sex Ed

Comprehensive health education, which includes sex education, is required. This instruction must include HIV/STIs and detailed healthy relationships education, although discussion of consent is not specified. Instruction must be evidence-based and culturally inclusive according to Vermont's Educational Quality Standards but there is no mention of medical accuracy. Instruction must also cover decision-making related to sexual activity and pregnancy outcomes including abstinence, contraception, and abortion. Instruction related to sexual assault prevention and healthy relationships must be developmentally appropriate.



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Current Requirement

- Vermont schools are required to teach sex education under “comprehensive health education.”
 - Curriculum must include human development, sexuality, reproduction, STI prevention, family life, contraception, and healthy relationships.
 - Curriculum must include instruction on abstinence.
- Curriculum does not require instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, the curriculum must be culturally competent and inclusive.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on consent.

- Parents or guardians may remove their children from instruction pertaining to disease if the content conflicts with their religious beliefs. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)
- Vermont has no law regarding medically accurate instruction.

RECENT LEGISLATION SHAPING THE STATE LANDSCAPE

According to Vermont’s statutes, sex education, taught under “comprehensive health education”, must include instruction on sexuality and reproduction, STIs, decision-making skills, how to recognize and prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence, contraceptives, and outcomes of pregnancy, including childbirth, adoption, and abortion. Despite the range of topics required to be taught, the sex education curriculum is not entirely comprehensive, as it still does not require instruction on sexual orientation, gender identity, or affirmative consent. Even so, Vermont schools continue to make their classrooms more affirming environments for students, such as by [opting to use inclusive, person-first language](#). That being said, SIECUS has not observed any introduced sex education-specific legislation since 2022.

Beyond sex education legislation, Vermont lawmakers have been successful in passing protections for LGBTQIA+ young people over the past few years. In 2022, a [resolution](#) was passed to support transgender youth and their parents seeking gender affirming care in the state. Additionally, [House Bill 628](#) was passed and allows individuals to amend their birth certificate to be affirming of their gender identity. In 2023, [House Bill 89](#) was signed into law and went a step further by protecting access to both gender affirming care and abortion, constituting a “[shield law](#)”.

Right now, advocates can take action to address compliance with the comprehensive health education law and ensure that young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After identifying what topics are missing from local sex education, advocates can vocalize the importance of implementing specific elements of sex education, such as the inclusion of consent and discussion on 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. **Vermont’s 2025-2026 legislative session convenes January 8th, 2025, and adjourns May 8th, 2026.**

Further, advocates can contact their representatives to discuss the need for inclusive sex education in Vermont schools and alignment of state standards with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). 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 Vermont...

State Law: A Closer Look

[Vermont Statutes Annotated](#), Title 16 §§ 131, 133, 134, and 135 require schools to include instruction on topics related to sexual health as part of their comprehensive health program. Comprehensive health instruction must be taught in elementary and secondary schools. The comprehensive health program has 10 components that students must learn, four of which are related to sexuality:

- Body structure and function, including the physical, psychosocial, and psychological basis of human development, sexuality, and reproduction
- Disease, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as other communicable diseases, and the prevention of disease...
- Family health and mental health, including instruction that promotes the development of responsible personal behavior involving decision making about sexual activity, including abstinence; skills that strengthen existing family ties involving communication, cooperation, and interaction between parents and students; and instruction to aid in the establishment of strong family life in the future, thereby contributing to the enrichment of the community...
- Human growth and development, including understanding the physical, emotional, and social elements of individual development and interpersonal relationships, including instruction in parenting methods and styles. This shall include information regarding the possible outcomes of premature sexual activity, contraceptives, adolescent pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, and abortion.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from instruction pertaining to “disease, its symptoms, development, and treatment” if the content is in conflict with their religious beliefs. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

State Standards

In 2024, the State Board of Education adopted the SHAPE America [National Health Education Standards](#) as a framework for schools to develop health curricula. Schools **must** align their curriculum with these standards; however, these standards don’t specify sexual health concepts.

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

Vermont 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 Vermont’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](#).