



Virginia State of Sex Ed



Current Requirement: Sex education, also known as “family life education” (FLE) in Virginia, is not required by law. If they do decide to teach “family life education,” they must follow state law and Board of Education guidelines, including the Standards of Learning (SOL).

- The standards of learning include instruction on contraception and STI prevention.
- This curriculum must emphasize abstinence.
- The curriculum must be medically accurate.
- If family life education is provided, the curriculum must cover certain topics in the *Family Life Education Guidelines* and SOL, such as dating violence, violence prevention, consent, and personal boundaries.
- The curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Parents or guardians may remove their students from any class. [This is called an “opt-out” policy.](#)

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Recent Legislation Shaping the State Landscape

Unfortunately, advocates have had to work against restrictive sex education legislation. In recent years, several bills have been introduced to [mandate the use of high-definition fetal development videos](#), specifically LiveAction’s “Meet Baby Olivia” video, alongside “family life education”. These proposed laws are designed to spread anti-abortion misinformation and reinforce abortion stigma in the classroom. The bill, introduced in 2024 as [House Bill 1516](#),

then [as House Bill 2440/Senate Bill 1066](#) in 2025, and most recently [as House Bill 719](#) in 2026, has so far been unsuccessful.

Even amidst oppositional efforts, advocates in Virginia have worked to advance sex education over the past few years gradually. In 2024, [House Bill 1221](#) passed, allowing schools to teach menstrual health as part of family life education. Another bill, [House Bill 1020](#), was introduced in the same session and would have required “family life education” to include the characteristics of an abusive relationship, have age-appropriate education on prevention and recognizing dating violence, and the importance of personal boundaries. Unfortunately, it was ultimately unsuccessful, unlike House Bill 1221.

Advocates in Action

Advocates can take action to ensure young people in Virginia have access to quality “family life education.” After identifying what topics are missing from the local FLE curriculum, 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. Additionally, advocates can push for FLE to be taught in school districts currently not teaching any sex education.

Advocates can also contact their representatives to discuss the need for a comprehensive sex education mandate in Virginia and how existing state Standards of Learning can become aligned with the [National Sex Education Standards](#). Advocates are encouraged to use the [Community Action Toolkit](#) to strengthen local organizing efforts. For additional guidance, advocates can contact the SIECUS Policy team by emailing info@siecus.org or join the Sexuality Education Policy Action Council (SEPAC) using our [interest form](#).

More on sex ed in Virginia...

State Law: A Closer Look

Virginia mandates health education, but not sex education. If sex education, also known as family life education, is taught, then it must align with statutory law and Board of Education guidelines. [Virginia Code Annotated §§ 22.1-200, 22.1-207.1](#) and [22.1-207.2](#) state that all family life education programs that are offered must meet or exceed the “requirements of the [State] Board of Education.” Virginia permits local school boards to develop family life education programs with the “goals of reducing the incidence of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases [STDs] and substance abuse among teenagers.”

According to [Virginia Code Annotated § 22.1-207.1:1](#), “any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall require the Standards of Learning objectives related to dating violence and the characteristics of abusive relationships to be taught at least once in middle school and at least twice in high school.” The curriculum shall incorporate age-appropriate and evidence-based elements on prevention of dating violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, including sexual harassment using electronic means, and sexual

violence. Additionally, family life education curriculum **may** incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on child sexual abuse, child abduction, human trafficking, the harmful effects of female genital mutilation, the importance of personal privacy and personal boundaries, and the law and meaning of consent.

The law states that parents or guardians may remove their students from any class. [This is called an “opt-out” policy.](#)

State Standard

The state Board of Education's [Family Life Education Guidelines and Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools](#) for grades K–12 offer curriculum guidance for Virginia schools. These guidelines must include the following: family living and community relationships; the benefits, challenges, responsibilities, and value of marriage for men, women, children, and communities; the value of family relationships; abstinence education; the value of postponing sexual activity; the benefits of adoption as a positive choice in the event of an unwanted pregnancy; human sexuality; human reproduction; the prevention of human trafficking; dating violence; the characteristics of abusive relationships; steps to take to deter sexual assault, the availability of counseling and legal resources, and, in the event of such sexual assault, the importance of immediate medical attention and advice, as well as the requirements of the law; the etiology, prevention, and effects of sexually transmitted diseases; and mental health education and awareness.

Local school boards must have school health advisory boards that decide which curriculum to use for family life education. According to the guidelines, “The Family Life Education Standards of Learning objectives approved by the Board of Education shall be used by the local school board.” Still, schools can reassign specific objectives to different grade levels, as they see fit.

Youth Sexual Health Data

The CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) tracks [adolescent health behaviors](#), including sexual health behaviors. **To learn more about Virginia's 2023 YRBS results, [click here](#).** The CDC's [School Health Profiles](#) measure school health policies, practices, and the sexual health topics taught in schools. **Virginia's results from the 2024 School Health Profiles Survey were not representative and thus excluded from the [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](#).