

SEX EDUCATION IN TEXAS

WHAT DOES STATE LAW SAY?

Sex education supports adolescent health and teen pregnancy prevention. Following the adoption of new Health Education minimum curriculum standards in 2020, school districts across Texas may need to update sex education curriculum. State law lays out the process for review and adoption of sex education curriculum and instruction. Districts will offer the updated Health Education standards in the 2022-23 school year.

New Curriculum Standards

In November 2020, for the first time in more than two decades, the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted new minimum curriculum standards that guide sex education in Texas. These newly adopted Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, for Health Education include many improvements. Health Education is an elective at the high school level but required in middle school, and key topics will now be offered at the middle school level. New TEKS include:



To view the new Health Education TEKS, scan this code.

- Basic information on key topics like anatomy, puberty, and reproduction.
- Information on contraception, condoms, and prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- The importance of abstinence.
- Standards on healthy relationships, such as prevention of sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and in support of topics such as healthy communication. While the standards teach the importance of respecting the boundaries of other people, they do not include consent.
- Standards do not include language acknowledging LGBTQ students.

Why is sex education important?

- Research shows that sex education does not make youth more likely to become sexually active, but does support reproductive health.
- 75% of Texas voters support "abstinence-plus" sex education that teaches about contraception, STI prevention and healthy relationships.
- More than half of Texas high school juniors and almost 2/3 of seniors report having been sexually active.

State Laws About Sex Education



Most of our laws about sex education are found in Section 28.004 of the Texas Education Code. These laws cover the following topics:

- **School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs):** The law creates SHACs, which are parent and community volunteer groups charged with ensuring that local community values are reflected in health education instruction.
- **Curriculum adoption:** State law requires sex education curriculum to be adopted by school boards on the recommendation of SHACs.
- **Sex education content:** Instruction related to human sexuality must stress abstinence from sexual activity for students as the preferred and safest choice of behavior. If education on contraception and condoms is included, schools must teach "human use reality rates" regarding efficacy.
- **Parent rights:** Parent have the right to review sex education curriculum. They must be notified about sex education that will be provided to their children and have a right to opt their children out of any sex education lessons without penalty.
- **What laws don't include:** Sex education in Texas is not required under statute. Information is not required in statute to be medically accurate.