

Sex and STI/HIV Education

BACKGROUND: The advent of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s spurred states to reevaluate their sex education policies and, in some cases, expand their requirements. Most states require that public schools teach some form of sex or STI/HIV education. Most states, including some that do not mandate the instruction itself, also place requirements on how abstinence or contraception should be handled when included in a school district's curriculum. This guidance is heavily weighted toward stressing abstinence; in contrast, while many states allow or require that contraception be covered, none requires that it be stressed. Further affecting whether students receive instruction on sex or STIs/HIV are parental consent requirements or the more frequent "opt-out" clauses, which allow parents to remove students from instruction the parents find objectionable.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 20 states and the District of Columbia mandate that public schools teach sex education; many states, including several that do not mandate sex education, place requirements on how abstinence and contraception are treated when taught.
 - 23 states require that abstinence be stressed when taught as part of sex education; 10 states require simply that it be covered during instruction.
 - 14 states and the District of Columbia require that sex education programs cover contraception; no state requires that it be stressed.
- 35 states and the District of Columbia require the provision of STI/HIV education; many place requirements on how abstinence and contraception are treated.
 - 26 states require that abstinence be stressed when taught as part of STD/HIV education; 11 require that it be covered.
 - 17 states require that STI/HIV programs cover contraception; no state requires that it be stressed.
- 38 states and the District of Columbia require school districts to permit parental involvement in sexuality and STI/HIV education.
 - 3 states require parental consent in order for students to participate in sex or STI/HIV education.
 - 36 states and the District of Columbia allow parents to remove their children from instruction.



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STATE SEX AND STI/HIV EDUCATION POLICY

STATE	SEX EDUCATION			STI/HIV EDUCATION			PARENTAL ROLE	
	Mandated	If Taught, Content Required		Mandated	If Taught, Content Required		Consent Required	Opt-out Permitted
		Abstinence	Contraception		Abstinence	Contraception		
Alabama		Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X*
Arizona		Stress			Stress		X†	X†
Arkansas		Stress			Stress			
California		Cover	Cover	X	Cover	Cover		X
Colorado		Stress	Cover		Stress			X
Connecticut		Cover		X				X
Delaware	X	Cover	Cover	X	Cover	Cover		
Dist. of Columbia	X		Cover	X				X
Florida	X	Cover		X				X
Georgia	X	Cover		X	Cover			X
Hawaii	X	Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		
Idaho								X
Illinois		Stress‡			Stress‡	Cover‡		X
Indiana		Stress		X	Stress			
Iowa	X			X				X
Kansas	X			X				X
Kentucky	X	Cover		X	Cover			
Louisiana		Stress			Stress			X
Maine	X	Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
Maryland	X	Cover	Cover	X	Cover	Cover		X
Massachusetts								X*
Michigan		Stress		X	Stress			X
Minnesota	X			X	Cover			X
Mississippi ^Ω		Stress			Stress			X
Missouri		Stress		X	Stress			X
Montana	X	Cover		X	Cover			X†
Nevada	X			X			X	
New Hampshire				X	Cover			X
New Jersey	X			X				X*
New Mexico				X	Stress	Cover		
New York				X	Stress	Cover		X†
North Carolina	X	Stress		X	Stress			
Ohio				X	Stress			X
Oklahoma		Stress		X	Cover	Cover		X
Oregon	X	Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
Pennsylvania				X	Stress			X*,†
Rhode Island	X	Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
South Carolina	X	Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
South Dakota ^Φ								
Tennessee	X	Stress		X	Stress			X
Texas		Stress			Stress			X
Utah [◇]	X	Stress		X	Stress		X	
Vermont	X	Cover	Cover	X	Cover	Cover		X*
Virginia		Cover	Cover		Cover	Cover		X
Washington		Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
West Virginia		Stress	Cover	X	Stress	Cover		X
Wisconsin		Stress		X	Stress			X
TOTAL	20 +DC			35+DC			3	36+DC

* Parents' removal of student must be based on religious or moral beliefs.

† In AZ, MT, NY and PA, opt-out is only permitted for STI education, including instruction on HIV; in AZ, parental consent is required only for sex education.

‡ IL has a broad set of laws mandating general health education, including abstinence; a more specific second law requires a school district that provides sex education to stress abstinence and to provide statistics on the efficacy of condoms as HIV/STI prevention.

Ω Localities may override state requirements for sex education topics, including abstinence; state prohibits including material that "contradicts the required components."

Φ Abstinence is taught within state-mandated character education.

◇ State prohibits teachers from responding to students' spontaneous questions in ways that conflict with the law's requirements.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For information on state legislative and policy activity click on Guttmacher's [Monthly State Update](#) and for state level information and data on reproductive health issues, click on Guttmacher's [State Center](#).

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