

The SIECUS State Profiles



OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA'S SEX ED SNAPSHOT

THE STATE OF SEX EDUCATION

Sex education continues to be a topic of debate among Oklahoma legislators, most recently cumulating in the introduction of a trio of bills aiming to advance it. In 2019, Senator Kay Floyd championed [Senate Bill 926](#), successful legislation that requires curriculum related to human sexuality to include instruction on consent. Two additional bills, [House Bill 1018](#) and [Senate Bill 50](#), were introduced in an effort to update Oklahoma's HIV/AIDS curriculum requirements and require school districts to provide communication training concerning pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI) prevention to parents and students. While both bills were unsuccessful, advocates are capitalizing on the success of Senate Bill 926 and working on a collaborative effort in 2020 to require health education in elementary schools. With continued efforts like these, advocates are optimistic about further advancing sex education in Oklahoma.

Sex education is not currently mandated in Oklahoma and schools are only required to provide instruction on HIV/AIDS prevention. Because Oklahoma schools are not required to provide sex education to students, school districts are left to decide what type of sex education—if any at all—they provide to young people. While Oklahoma City Public Schools are taking steps to improve sex education, advocates in more rural areas have taken it upon themselves to ensure young people in their communities receive adequate sex education. For example, some members of the Muscogee Creek Nation, a Native tribe headquartered in Okmulgee, have begun offering medically accurate sex education courses to young people in their community.

Mandating local control over sex education presents unique challenges that have resulted in a glaring disparity regarding the quality of sex education that students receive. Advocates report that at least four different types of sex education curriculum are used across the state, with students in larger cities such as Oklahoma City and Tulsa being more likely to receive sex education instruction. Thrive OKC, first formed in 2006 by six local organizations, provides opt-in medically accurate and evidence-based sex education to young people in Oklahoma City Public Schools and educates community members on pregnancy prevention. All students in the district receive sex education from outside agencies, including Thrive OKC, and advocates have noted that an increasing number of schools are providing comprehensive sex education.

Advocates report that the lack of a statewide mandate, funding and staff availability, and unfavorable public opinion in some communities are among the biggest barriers to providing comprehensive sex education to Oklahoma youth. Keeping these barriers in mind, advocates can take action right now to ensure young people in their community have access to quality sex education. After contacting their local school board, advocates can determine what topics are missing from sex education instruction, such as instruction on consent, sexual orientation and gender identity, and contraceptives. They can then vocalize the important need for advancing sex education requirements in their community and take action to address misinformation surrounding comprehensive sex education. Further, advocates can contact their

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representatives to discuss the critical need for advancing comprehensive sex education requirements. Advocates are encouraged to use the SIECUS [Community Action Toolkit](#) to guide local efforts to advance sex education.

STATE SEX EDUCATION POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

- Oklahoma schools are **not** required to teach sex education. However, they are required to provide HIV/AIDS prevention instruction.
 - Curriculum is not required to be comprehensive.
 - The primary purpose of the curriculum must be to inform students about abstinence.
- Curriculum is not required to include instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity. However, instruction must highlight that “engaging in homosexual activity, promiscuous sexual activity, intravenous drug use, or contact with contaminated blood products is now known to be primarily responsible for contact with the AIDS virus.”
- Curriculum must include instruction on consent.
- Parents or guardians can submit written notification if they do not want their children to participate in sexuality and HIV/AIDS courses. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)
- Oklahoma has no standard regarding medically accurate sex education curriculum. However, HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum must be medically accurate.

STATE HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS

This section highlights sex education bills that were introduced during the 2019 state legislative session as well as bills that have been introduced thus far in 2020. These proposed bills provide a brief overview of both recent and current legislative action taken to advance or restrict sex education. For a more comprehensive look at relevant legislation concerning sex education and related topics such as reproductive health care, LGBTQ rights, and HIV/AIDS, continue reading on to the “State Legislative Activity” section of Oklahoma’s profile.

2020 Legislative Session

[House Bill 3090](#), (pending):

- If successful, would require life skills classes to include instruction on consent.

[Senate Bill 1368](#), (pending):

- If successful, would require sex education curriculum to be approved for medical accuracy by the State Department of Health.

2019 Legislative Session

[House Bill 1018](#), (failed):

- Sought to require each school district to provide age-appropriate instruction on HIV/AIDS and related issues. Clarifies the grades in which the instruction must be given and what the instruction must entail. Removes discussion of homosexual activity in relation to HIV/AIDS.

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Senate Bill 50, (failed):

- Sought to require school districts to provide students and their parents or guardians in grades 6-12 with communication training regarding pregnancy and STI prevention, abstinence, and healthy relationships.

Senate Bill 926, (enacted):

- Requires curriculum related to human sexuality to include instruction on consent.

MORE ON SEX ED IN OKLAHOMA

STATE LAW

Oklahoma does not require schools to teach sex education. However, according to Oklahoma Statutes [70-11-103.3](#) and [70-11-105.1](#), schools are required to provide human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention education. This education must be limited to the “discussion of the disease AIDS and its spread and prevention” and include instruction on consent. The class must be taught once during either grade 5 or 6, once during grades 7–9, and once during grades 10–12. All curricula and materials must be checked for medical accuracy by the Oklahoma Department of Health and must only include “factual medical information for AIDS prevention.” Additionally,

- D) AIDS prevention education shall specifically teach students that:
 - 1) Engaging in homosexual activity, promiscuous sexual activity, intravenous drug use, or contact with contaminated blood products is now known to be primarily responsible for contact with the AIDS virus;
 - 2) Avoiding the activities specified [above] is the only method of preventing the spread of the virus;
 - 3) Sexual intercourse, with or without condoms, with any person testing positive for HIV antibodies, or any other person infected with HIV, places that individual in a high-risk category for developing AIDS.
- E) The program of AIDS prevention education shall teach that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain means for the prevention of the spread or contraction of the AIDS virus through sexual contact. It shall also teach that artificial means of birth control are not a certain means of preventing the spread of the AIDS virus, and reliance on such methods puts a person at risk for exposure to the disease.

If a school district chooses to teach sex education, all curricula and materials must be approved for medical accuracy by the state and by the district superintendent. All materials must also be available to parents for review. In addition, all sex education classes must have “the teaching of or informing students about the practice of abstinence” as one of their primary purposes.

A school district must provide written notification of all sex and HIV/AIDS prevention classes. Parents or guardians can submit written notification if they do not want their children to participate in such classes. [This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.](#)

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STATE STANDARDS

Oklahoma's [*Academic Standards for Health Education*](#) provides a standard for the development of health curricula. Sex education is not mentioned.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

State legislative activity related to sex education does not take place in isolation from the broader embroiled political and policy climate. Attacks on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) individuals, and efforts to limit access to abortion care and other reproductive health care services prevent students from receiving comprehensive sex education and accessing sexual and reproductive health care services. Below are highlights of current legislative activity related to these topics.

2020 SESSION: CONVENED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
HOUSE BILL 3090	REQUIRES LIFE SKILLS CLASSES TO TEACH CONSENT TRAINING.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMON EDUCATION
HOUSE BILL 3872	PROHIBITS HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS FROM PERFORMING CONVERSION THERAPY ON MINORS.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
HOUSE BILL 4116	PROHIBITS ABORTION IN ALL CASES WITH NO EXCEPTIONS. ANY DOCTOR WHO IS FOUND TO HAVE PERFORMED OR SUPERVISED AN ABORTION IS SUBJECT TO 40-50 YEARS IN PRISON.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 1368	REQUIRES SEX EDUCATION CURRICULUM TO BE APPROVED FOR MEDICAL ACCURACY BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
SENATE BILL 1819	PROHIBITS MINORS FROM RECEIVING GENDER AFFIRMING MEDICAL PROCEDURE OR HORMONES TREATMENTS.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
SENATE BILL 1859	ABORTION IS PROHIBITED WHERE A FETA HEARTBEAT OR BRAIN WAVES CAN BE DETECTED.	REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2019 SESSION: ADJOURNED MAY 23, 2019

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
HOUSE BILL 1018	REQUIRES EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT TO PROVIDE AGE APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION ON HIV/AIDS AND RELATED ISSUES. CLARIFIES THE GRADES IN WHICH THE INSTRUCTION MUST BE GIVEN AND WHAT THE INSTRUCTION MUST ENTAIL. REMOVES DISCUSSION OF HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO HIV/AIDS.	VETOED
HOUSE BILL 1182	PROHIBITS PHYSICIANS FROM PERFORMING AN ABORTION, CLASSIFYING THE ACT AS UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT.	DIED IN THE HOUSE

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HOUSE BILL 1396	PROHIBITS ABORTION AFTER THE SEX OF THE FETUS HAS BEEN DETERMINED UNLESS IN THE CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.	DIED IN THE HOUSE
HOUSE BILL 2456	PROHIBITS PROVIDERS FROM PROVIDING CONVERSION THERAPY TO MINORS.	DIED IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
SENATE BILL 13	ESTABLISHES FETAL PERSONHOOD.	DIED IN THE SENATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 50	REQUIRES SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS IN GRADES 6-12 WITH COMMUNICATION TRAINING REGARDING PREGNANCY AND STI PREVENTION, ABSTINENCE, AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.	DIED IN THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS AND COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
SENATE BILL 614	REQUIRES CENTERS THAT PROVIDE MEDICATION ABORTION TO DISPLAY A SIGN STATING THAT MIFEPRISTONE ALONE IS NOT ALWAYS EFFECTIVE IN ENDING A PREGNANCY AND THAT ITS EFFECTS MAY BE REVERSED. AFTER A PHYSICIAN PROVIDES MIFEPRISTONE TO THEIR PATIENT, THEY MUST PROVIDE WRITTEN INSTRUCTION STATING THAT THE INGESTION OF MIFEPRISTONE ALONE IS NOT ALWAYS EFFECTIVE IN ENDING A PREGNANCY AND THAT ITS EFFECTS MAY BE REVERSED.	ENACTED
SENATE BILL 195	PROPOSES AN AMENDMENT TO THE OKLAHOMA CONSTITUTION THAT STATES THAT NO PROVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION SECURES OR PROTECTS THE RIGHT TO AN ABORTION.	DIED IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES
SENATE BILL 926	REQUIRES CURRICULUM RELATED TO HUMAN SEXUALITY TO INCLUDE INSTRUCTION ON CONSENT.	ENACTED

LEGISLATIVE KEY

SEX EDUCATION
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE
SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY
HIV/AIDS (THAT IMPACTS YOUTH)

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. To learn more about Oklahoma's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results, [click here](#).

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STATE SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES DATA

In 2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the 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 20 sexual health education topics](#) as critical for ensuring a young person's sexual health.

Oklahoma did not participate in the 2016 or 2018 School Health Profiles.

The quality of sex education taught often reflects funding available for sex education programs.

To learn more about federal funding streams, [click here](#).