

Texas Health and Sexuality Education Laws and Standards

Summary

Texas law requires public schools to teach health education, including a parenting and paternity awareness (PAPA) program. Local school districts develop their health education program in partnership with local school health advisory councils, which help ensure that community values are reflected in the instruction. Districts cannot change health education policies—or choose to teach sexuality and HIV/AIDS education—without considering the local council’s input. As guidance, the Texas Education Association provides state curriculum frameworks and program standards. During this school year we will be teaching an Abstinence Education Program that follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Health Education. With permission your child will receive the lessons for their grade level. The curriculum consists of lessons from the Scott & White Wellness & Sexual Health™ CURRICULUM Program as well as WAIT training combination. These positive, interactive lessons teach to the concrete nature of adolescent brain development and have been constructed to advocate abstinence over unhealthy choices, promote setting high standards and to encourage communication in family and peer relationships. Parental involvement in the participation of future development of curriculum is encouraged through your district’s School Health Advisory Committee.

School Health Advisory Council

Each board of trustees must establish a local school health advisory council to “assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district’s health education instruction.” The school district must consider the council’s input before changing its health education curriculum or instruction, and must follow content requirements or standards detailed in the state law.

Human Sexuality: Pregnancy and Disease Prevention

Instruction in these topics may be adopted by a local board of trustees with input from the school health advisory council. If a district teaches sexuality education, it must:

- present sexual abstinence as the preferred behavior for unmarried students
- focus more on abstinence than any other behavior
- emphasize that consistent abstinence before marriage is the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy, STDs, HIV/AIDS, and “the emotional trauma associated with adolescent sexual activity”

Parental Notification and Opt-out Policies

Districts choosing to teach human sexuality must provide instructional materials for public review. Parents/guardians must be notified of material content and their right to deny such instruction as a part of their child's education.

Adapted from Texas Education Code, Sec. 28.004, Local School Health Advisory Council and Health Education

Instruction <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.28.htm>

Resources:

- National Abstinence Education Association: <http://www.abstinenceassociation.org>
- Abstinence Clearinghouse: <http://abstinence.net>
- National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth: <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/publications/absmedia.htm>
- Department of State Health Services: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/default.shtm>

Information above was compiled from Abstinence Education and the Texas Education Agency.