

New Curriculum Standards

High-quality sex education supports adolescent health, teen pregnancy prevention, and healthy relationships. 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 across a wide array of topics, including sexual and reproductive health. Health Education is an elective at the high school level but required in middle school, and key sex ed topics will now be offered at the middle school level. Many school districts do not currently offer sex education, and will need to adopt updated curriculum to align with new TEKS by the 2022-23 school year.

New TEKS include:

- Age-appropriate, timely information on key topics like anatomy, puberty, menstruation and human reproduction.
- Information on contraception, condoms, and prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), now required at the middle and high school levels.
- The importance of abstinence.
- Standards on healthy relationships, such as prevention of sexual abuse, dating violence, sex trafficking, and in support of topics such as healthy communication and respect. 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. However, districts may choose to include content that is inclusive of LGBTQ students, including bullying prevention.



Health TEKS:
<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/laws-and-rules/texas-administrative-code/19-tac-chapter-115>.

New laws for Sex Education

HB 1525 in the 87th Legislative Session made notable changes to statute guiding sex education:

- Districts **must secure parental permission** for students to receive sex ed. This provision will expire in 2024.
- SHACs must post meeting notices, minutes and recordings.
- Districts must adopt a formal practice for sex ed adoption, including **two public SHAC meetings**.
- Districts must provide more intensive parental notification.
- Districts must post public domain materials online and must allow parents to purchase copyrighted materials or review on the student's campus.

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, with at least two public SHAC meetings.
- **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:** Between 2021-2024, parents must actively opt their children into sex education. They have the right to review or purchase sex education curriculum. They must be notified about sex education that will be provided to their children. Public domain materials must be posted online.
- **What laws don't include:** Sex education in Texas is not required under statute. Information is not required in statute to be medically accurate.