

SEX EDUCATION CURRICULUM: WHAT DO HEALTH EDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW?

Texas law requires local school districts to follow a specific process when adopting curriculum for sex education, as well as instruction for prevention of child abuse, dating or family violence, and sex trafficking. Many of these steps changed in the 2021 legislative session.

How the process works

1. The school board adopts a formal resolution noting the process that the district will use to adopt instructional materials for sex education or prevention of child abuse, dating or family violence, and sex trafficking.
2. The school board issues a resolution directing the SHAC to review curriculum and make a recommendation.
3. The SHAC reviews curriculum and holds at least two public meetings before selecting their recommendation.
4. The SHAC presents the curriculum recommendation to the school board. The recommended curriculum must be made publicly available in this process.
5. The school board adopts the curriculum through a record vote at a public meeting.
6. Before campuses provide the new curriculum, they must send extensive notices to parents/guardians describing the content that will be taught. Parents/guardians must provide consent to opt their children into this instruction.

What is the board's role?

The elected school board trustees are responsible for starting the process by issuing a resolution directing the SHAC to review curriculum and make a recommendation. They also vote to adopt curriculum.

What is the SHAC's role?

Each Texas school district is required by state law to have a School Health Advisory Council, or SHAC. A SHAC is made up of parent and community volunteers, as well as district staff, appointed by the school board. SHACs are charged with ensuring that local values are reflected in health education.

The SHAC reviews curriculum for sex education or prevention of child abuse, dating or family violence, and sex trafficking, and makes a recommendation to the school board.

Advocating for Health Education

Health educators can play an important role in advocating for high quality sex education and health education in their district.

- Apply to serve on your district SHAC.
- Consider attending the SHAC public meetings to voice your support for high-quality instructional materials.
- Talk to parents and community members about the importance of health education for their students.
- Answer questions parents may have about the curriculum.
- Advocate for sufficient training so you and colleagues feel comfortable teaching sex education
- Advocate for related services and instruction in support of mental health.

Questions to Ask

- What sex education curriculum is being proposed?
- Who designed or is offering the curriculum?
- Who will teach this curriculum?
- Is the curriculum medically accurate? Has it been evaluated for effectiveness?
- Does the curriculum align with new Health TEKS, including instruction on topics like contraception?
- Does the curriculum align with state statute?
- Does the curriculum use shame-based techniques?