

Health and Sex Education Requirements

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October 24, 2019 | 2019-R-0265

Issue

Describe the public school health and sex education requirements outlined in state statutes and regulations.

Summary

Connecticut requires its public schools to offer students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12 a specific “program of instruction” consisting of 12 subject areas, one of which is health and safety. The law specifies that health and safety include human growth and development, nutrition, disease prevention, and substance abuse prevention, to name a few ([CGS § 10-16b](#)).

The law does not prescribe a specific health and sex education curriculum that teachers must follow when instructing in these subject areas. Rather, districts develop curriculum at the local level and can receive help from the State Department of Education (SDE). SDE recommends that public school districts use the [Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework](#) for grades kindergarten through 12. In addition to the framework, SDE’s [school health education webpage](#) provides districts with standards and grade-level expectations, curriculum templates, and other resources.

Another law requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop family life curriculum guides for boards of education that include information on family planning, human sexuality, parenting, and other aspects of family life. Local boards are not required to offer the family life program, and if they do, individual students may opt out of taking it ([CGS §§ 10-16d](#) & [10-16e](#)).

State regulations do not address public school instruction.

Required Health and Safety Subject Area

The “program of instruction” established in state law refers to general subject areas that must be taught in public schools, and this includes health and safety. The law breaks “health and safety” into specific subtopics that must be taught, but no specific course is mandated ([CGS § 10-16b](#)).

By law, the required health and safety subtopics include:

- human growth and development;
- nutrition;
- first aid, including CPR;
- disease prevention and cancer awareness, including age- and developmentally-appropriate instruction in performing self-examinations for screening breast and testicular cancer;
- community and consumer health;
- physical, mental, and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention;
- substance abuse prevention, including opioid use and related disorders;
- safety, including the safe use of social media and may include the dangers of gang membership; and
- accident prevention ([CGS § 10-16b](#)).

Other Specific Health Related Requirements

Effects of Alcohol, Nicotine or Tobacco, and Drugs on Health, Character, Citizenship, and Personality Development. By law, these subjects must be taught every academic year to public school students in all grades ([CGS § 10-19\(a\)](#)).

AIDS. Each local and regional board of education must offer planned, ongoing, and systematic instruction on AIDS, as taught by legally qualified teachers. Boards may determine the content and scheduling of the instruction, and they must adopt a policy for exempting students from the instruction at a parent’s or guardian’s written request ([CGS § 10-19\(b\)](#)).

Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework

The law does not prescribe a specific health and sex education curriculum that teachers must follow. Rather, SDE recommends a framework, known as the [Healthy and Balanced Living](#)

[Curriculum Framework](#). Districts develop curriculum at the local level and can choose to incorporate the framework. In addition to the framework, SDE’s [school health education webpage](#) provides districts with standards and grade-level expectations, curriculum templates, and other resources.

The SDE-recommended framework encourages school districts to design curricula that help students master standards related to health education concepts at various grade levels. There are 14 standards. Table 1 provides a sample of the standards for health and sex education and the related grade level expectation. For the full list of standards, click [here](#).

Table 1: SDE-Recommended Curriculum Standards Relating to Health and Sex Education

<i>Curriculum Content Standard</i>	<i>Standard to Master by Grade 4</i>	<i>Standard to Master by Grade 8</i>	<i>Standard to Master by Grade 12</i>
Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health. Topics include human growth and development; community and environmental health; human sexuality; injury and disease prevention; HIV/AIDS; sexually-transmitted diseases; mental and emotional health; nutrition and physical activity; and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.	E (elementary).1.2. Describe the interrelationship of mental, emotional, social, and physical health during childhood; develop an appreciation of one’s own body	M (middle).1.2. Describe the interrelationship of mental, emotional, social, and physical health during pre-adolescence/ adolescence	H (high).1.2. Describe the interrelationship of mental, emotional, social, and physical health throughout adulthood
	E.1.3. Describe the basic structure and functions of the human body systems using medically accurate terminology and specific functions of the body systems	M.1.3. Explain how health is influenced by the growth and interaction of body systems	H.1.3. Evaluate the impact of personal behaviors on the functioning of body systems
	E.1.5. Examine how physical, social, and emotional environments influence personal health	M.1.5. Analyze ways in which the environment and personal health are interrelated	H.1.5. Analyze ways in which the environment influences the health of the community

Table 1 (continued)

Curriculum Content Standard	Standard to Master by Grade 4	Standard to Master by Grade 8	Standard to Master by Grade 12
<p>Standard 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice self-initiated health-enhancing behaviors to avoid and reduce health risks.</p> <p>Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.</p>	<p>E.1.9. Define the terms communicable (infectious) and non-communicable (non-infectious) diseases and identify ways to help prevent disease (e.g., HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cancer, heart disease)</p>	<p>M.1.9. Identify and discuss causes, modes of transmission, symptoms and prevention methods of communicable and non-communicable diseases</p>	<p>H.1.9. Research and analyze factors that increase the risk of contracting communicable and non-communicable diseases</p>
	<p>E.1.10. Describe the physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty</p>	<p>M.1.10. Describe puberty and human reproduction as it relates to medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education</p>	<p>H.1.10. Describe and analyze the physical, mental, emotional, and sexual changes that occur over a lifetime – from birth to death</p>
	<p>E.3.1. Identify responsible health behaviors</p>	<p>M.3.1. Explain the importance of assuming responsibility for personal health behaviors</p>	<p>H.3.1. Assess the importance of assuming responsibility for personal health behaviors</p>
	<p>E.5.1. Practice verbal and nonverbal communication as a means of enhancing health</p>	<p>M.5.1. Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communications skills as a means of enhancing health</p>	<p>H.5.1. Compare and contrast skills for communicating effectively with family, peers, and others</p>
	<p>E.5.4. Identify and demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings</p>	<p>M.5.4. Compare and contrast healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings</p>	<p>H.5.4. Analyze situations and demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings</p>

Family Life Curriculum Materials and Guides

Family Life Education. SBE must develop curriculum guides to assist boards of education in developing family life education programs in the public schools. The guides must include information on developing a curriculum that includes family planning; human sexuality; parenting; nutrition; and the emotional, physical, psychological, hygienic, economic, and social aspects of family life. The guides must not include abortion as an alternative to family planning ([CGS § 10-16c](#)).

Boards have the option to offer such programs in their public schools, but students are not required to participate ([CGS §§ 10-16d](#) & [10-16e](#)).

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