

Utah Sex Education Instruction: Frequently Asked Questions

Sex education instruction is included in the Health Education Core Standards once in middle school and once in high school. Information concerning this instruction is summarized here in a Question and Answer format.

Q. Is sex education instruction the same in every Utah school district?

A. No. Utah statute requires local education agencies (LEAs) to adopt curriculum for sex education for their schools. Local board policies may include less than what the law allows but never more.

Q. Is Utah's sex education instruction considered abstinence-only?

A. No. Utah's sex education instruction is abstinence-based. Teachers are required stress the importance of abstinence from all sexual activity before marriage and fidelity after marriage as methods for preventing certain communicable diseases. Utah law allows instruction in the areas of contraception and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Specifically, allow instruction to include information about contraceptive methods or devices that stresses effectiveness, limitations, risks, and information on state law applicable to minors obtaining contraceptive methods or devices.

Q. Do any LEAs prescribe an abstinence-only approach to sex education instruction?

Yes, currently there are several charter schools that prescribe to an abstinence-only approach. Other LEAs are abstinence only at the middle school level and provide contraceptive curriculum at the high school level only. While some LEAs are abstinence-based at all levels, stressing abstinence but providing information on contraceptives and condoms.

Q. Is parent/guardian permission required for sex education instruction?

A. Utah is one of three states with an opt-in requirement. Before sex education instruction may begin, there must be a signed permission form on file with the instructor. The USBE-generated form clearly outlines the course of instruction and must be in the hands of parents a minimum of two weeks prior to the start of instruction. This allows parents time to dialog with teachers regarding course content.

Q. Is the school the primary source of sex education instruction?

A. No. Parents should be the primary source of sex education instruction and values relating to this subject. Schools serve as partners for instruction and dialog between homes and schools is vital. Parents are encouraged to utilize teacher resources to assist in home instruction.

Q. What content is currently included in Utah's health education core standards that impacts sex education instruction?

A. The current core standards includes the following relevant content:

- Physical, social, cognitive, and emotional changes of adolescence
- Reproductive anatomy and physiology, including the healthy function of the reproductive system
- Benefits of practicing abstinence

- Process of pregnancy, including fertilization, fetal development, practices for a healthy pregnancy, and birth process
- Pregnancy prevention and Newborn Safe Haven Law
- Prevention of sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STI/STD), including condoms
- Common reproductive diseases, including cancer
- Accurate and credible sources of information around sexual health, sexual abuse prevention, and healthy relationships
- Full core standards can be found here: [Utah Core Standards for Health Education](#)

Q. Is there a screening process in place for the sex education resources and guest speakers?

A. Yes. In accordance with Utah Law, each LEA has an active Sex Education Instructional Materials Committee in place that previews resources and guest speakers for use in its classrooms. This committee must include an equal or greater number of parents as school staff.

Q. What sex education training is required of health educators?

A. The following trainings are required of Utah’s health educators:

- Sex Education and Health Methods courses in undergraduate preparation.
- USBE Law and Policy Workshops for new and newly assigned teachers of human sexuality instruction.
- LEA-sponsored update human sexuality trainings at least once every three years.

Q. What standards of the Health Education Core Standards address sex education topics?

A. Healthy relationships, communication, refusal, and decision making skills, and child and adolescent protective factors are addressed throughout the core. Sex education specific standards are all under Strand 6: Human Development.

Q. Are there sex education resources available to parents?

A. Yes. The [Health Education](#) webpage has resources available for parents and educators. Additionally, parents can with their local health educators to review the curriculum used in class as well as learn when specific topics will be discussed so parents may give additional information at home.

For additional information, contact the USBE Health Education Specialist Jodi Parker @ 801-538-7734 or email: jodi.parker@schools.utah.gov