

Utah Human Sexuality Instruction: Frequently Asked Questions

Human sexuality instruction is included in the Health Education Core Curriculum and usually occupies four to six hours of instruction. Information concerning this instruction is summarized here in a Question and Answer format.

Q. Is human sexuality instruction the same in every Utah school district?

A. No. Utah statute allows LEAs to establish standards for human sexuality instruction for their schools. Board policies may include less than what the law allows but never more.

Q. Is Utah's human sexuality instruction considered abstinence-only?

A. No. Utah's human sexuality instruction is abstinence-based. Teachers are required to present a strong abstinence message, but the law allows instruction in the areas of contraception and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

Q. Do any LEAs prescribe an abstinence-only approach to human sexuality instruction?

A. Four districts in Utah (Canyons, Jordan, Nebo, and Provo) are currently abstinence-only districts. All other districts are abstinence-based.

Q. Is parent/guardian permission required for human sexuality instruction?

A. Utah is one of three states with an opt-in requirement. Before human sexuality instruction may begin, there must be a signed permission form on file with the instructor. The USOE-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 human sexuality instruction?

A. No. Parents should be the primary source of human sexuality 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 curriculum that impacts human sexuality instruction?

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

- Respect for self and others
- Stages of human development.
- Adolescent brain development and how it impacts behavior.
- Structure and function of male and female reproductive systems.
- Protective factors for high risk behaviors.
- Refusal skills including establishment of personal boundaries and assertive behaviors.
- How sexual abstinence before marriage contributes to overall wellness.
- Contraception.

- Transmission, prevention, and treatment of communicable diseases including those that are sexually transmitted.
- Personal values and dating behaviors.
- Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy dating relationships.
- Laws that relate to relationships and sexual behavior.
- The importance of breast and testicular self-examinations for cancer prevention.
- Student communication skills including the ability to talk to parents about human sexuality issues.
- Strategies to prevent sexual harassment.
- The impact of personal choices that may affect a fetus (e.g., nutrition, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs).
- The importance of a physical exam for early detection of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Responsibilities and demands of parenthood.
- Adoption as an option for unintended pregnancy.
- Dangers associated with the internet and other technologies.

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

A. Yes. In accordance with Utah Law, each LEA has an active Human Sexuality Instructional Materials Committee in place that previews resources and guest speakers for use in its classrooms.

Q. What human sexuality training is required of health educators?

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

- Human Sexuality 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 Secondary Health Core address human sexuality topics?

A. Healthy relationships, communication, refusal, and decision making skills, and child and adolescent protective factors are addressed throughout the core. Sex Education- specific topics are presented in Standards 5 and 6.

Q. Are there sex education resources available to parents?

A. Yes. All resources in the Electronic Tool Box are for teachers and parents. They can be found in Appendix B of the Secondary Health Education Core Curriculum. Two specific parent resources are listed on the Health Education Law and Policy page.

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