

Importance of Comprehensive Personal Health and Safety and Sexual Health Education

Research demonstrates that instruction for students in all grades under the umbrella of personal health and safety and sexual health education – when done comprehensively – promotes self-confidence and a sense of belonging. It can also prevent health problems, unintended pregnancy in adolescents, and many forms of violence.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Illinois Learning Standards for Comprehensive Personal Health and Safety and Sexual Health Education provide districts that choose to teach these topics a medically accurate, evidence-informed, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed guide for age-appropriate instruction in all grades.

The Role of Parents/Guardians:

Parents/guardians play an essential role in talking to their children about sexual health, and the law provides many ways for parents/guardians to be involved and aware of the instruction students are receiving.

Additionally, parents/guardians may opt their student out of instruction.

As required by state law, the Illinois Learning Standards for Comprehensive Personal Health and Safety and Sexual Health Education are the [National Sex Education Standards](#). The Illinois standards are organized into seven strands:^{iv}

- Consent and Healthy Relationships
- Anatomy and Physiology
- Puberty and Adolescent Sexual Development
- Gender Identity and Expression
- Sexual Orientation and Identity
- Sexual Health
- Interpersonal Violence

Sex education in Illinois is optional for districts to provide.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/whatworks/what-works-sexual-health-education.htm>

ⁱⁱ Journal of Adolescent Health 68 (2021) 13e27. Eva S. Goldfarb, Ph.D., and Lisa D. Lieberman, Ph.D., Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.036>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.d21.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/all_statistics_20150619.pdf

^{iv} <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NSES-2020-web-updated-1.pdf>



Elementary School

Setting a foundation for safety in the early grades teaches about consent, boundaries, and healthy relationships.

“Children are most vulnerable to sexual abuse between the ages of 7 and 13. The median age for reported abuse is 9 years old nationally.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Middle School

Instruction at this stage of schooling is a key factor in contributing to a healthy school climate, as well as preventing bullying, suicide, mental health challenges, and peer harassment both online and in-person.

High School

Students approaching adulthood gain skills and tools for navigating relationships, including healthy sexual relationships.

View guidance:

www.isbe.net/sexualhealth

Questions? Contact ISBE’s Wellness Department at

[sexualhealtheducation@isbe.net.](mailto:sexualhealtheducation@isbe.net)

