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| **Sexual Health Education Requirements** **in Washington State:****Frequently Asked Questions****C:\Users\laurie.dils\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\J8L3HC50\OSPI-logo-sm.tiff** |
| **What is my district/school required to teach related to sexual health?**HIV/AIDS Prevention is required for all students in Washington annually, through grade 12, beginning no later than 5th grade. This requirement was established by the [AIDS Omnibus Act](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.230.070) (RCW 28A.230.070).**What does the AIDS Omnibus Act require?**In addition to requiring that all students receive yearly instruction starting no later than grade 5, HIV/AIDS prevention education must: * Be approved for medical accuracy
* Address the life-threatening dangers of HIV/AIDS, its transmission, and its prevention
* Include behaviors that place a person at risk of contracting HIV and methods to avoid such risk

In addition, schools must:* Provide a parent/guardian curriculum preview presentation, during weekend or evening hours (including curriculum and other materials used for instruction)
* Provide notice of the curriculum preview event at least one month prior to instruction
* Allow parents/guardians to remove students from HIV/AIDS prevention education **if** they attended the preview event and **if** they object in writing

**Is my district required to use the KNOW curriculum?**Districts may use any curriculum that has been reviewed for medical accuracy and coverage of required content by either the WA Department of Health (DOH) or local experts as defined in the AIDS Omnibus Act. The KNOW curriculum, developed by OSPI at the direction of the legislature, has undergone DOH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) review and is approved for use in WA schools. Training on use of the KNOW curriculum is provided by OSPI, but is not required. The KNOW curriculum is available for free download on the [HIV/Sexual Health Education webpage](http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx).**Is my district required to teach other sexual health content?**There are several state laws requiring specific sexual health content in the public schools:* [RCW 28A.230.020](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.230.020) (Common School Curriculum) requires that “all teachers shall stress the importance of…methods to prevent exposure to and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases…”
* [RCW 28A.300.145](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.145) was amended by the legislature in 2013 to require that schools offering sexual health education must include “age-appropriate information about the legal elements of sexual [sex] offenses (under chapter [9A.44](http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9A.44) RCW) where a minor is a victim and the consequences upon conviction.”
* IF schools do teach sexual health content, it must conform to the requirements of the **Healthy Youth Act** (HYA).

**What is the Healthy Youth Act?**In September 2008, Washington State’s Healthy Youth Act (HYA) went into effect. This law, [RCW 28A.300.475](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.300.475), relates to medically and scientifically accurate sexual health education in schools. The Healthy Youth Act requires that when teaching sexual health education, schools **must assure that the instruction:*** Is medically and scientifically accurate.
* Is age-appropriate.
* Is appropriate for students regardless of gender, race, disability status, or sexual orientation.
* Includes information about abstinence **and** other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
* Is consistent with the 2005 [*Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*](file:///%5C%5Ck12%5Cshares%5Cuser%20data%5Claurie.dils%5CMy%20New%20Machine%20Move%5CSex%20Ed%5C2005%20Sexual%20Health%20Guidelines.pdf)*.*

Parents or legal guardians may review the sexual health education curriculum offered in his or her child's school by filing a written request with the school district board of directors, the principal of the school his or her child attends, or the principal's designee. If parents want to excuse their child from sexual health education, they may do so by submitting a written request and should contact their school or district for the specific procedure.**What does “sexual health education” include?**[WAC 392-410-140](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=392-410-140) defines sexual health education as including development (physiological, psychological, and sociological), communication skills (intra- and interpersonal), health care and prevention resources, healthy relationships, and family/peer/community/media influences on healthy sexual relationships.**What does “medically and scientifically accurate” mean?**“Medically and scientifically accurate” means information that is verified or supported by research in compliance with scientific methods, is published in peer reviewed journals, and is recognized as accurate by objective professional organizations and agencies with expertise in the field of sexual health, including DOH, the CDC, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.**Do schools have to use a specific curriculum?** No, schools can use any curriculum materials they choose, as long as they comply with the requirements of the Healthy Youth Act. Schools are strongly encouraged to use the expertise of DOH to determine medical and scientific accuracy and to use the curriculum analysis tool (SHECAT) on [OSPI’s website](http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/Healthyyouthact.aspx) to assess consistency with the 2005 Guidelines.**Can schools use materials that have not been reviewed by OSPI and DOH?**Yes, schools can review their own materials for compliance with the AIDS Omnibus Act and/or Healthy Youth Act (see above). The [HIV/Sexual](http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx) Health Education page of the OSPI website also contains reports on two major curriculum reviews done jointly by OSPI and DOH in 2009 and 2011, which assessed how commonly used curricula address HYA requirements. Another curriculum review will be published in 2015.**Can schools use the KNOW curriculum by itself and be compliant with the HYA?**No. The KNOW curriculum is an excellent tool for HIV prevention education, but it does not provide adequate content to meet the criteria outlined in the 2005 *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*. Schools using the KNOW curriculum to satisfy the requirements of the AIDS Omnibus Act of 1988, who wish to provide additional sexual health education, should supplement the curriculum with other materials to be in alignment with the Healthy Youth Act.**Can outside speakers provide sexual health presentations in schools?**Schools may offer presentations by outside speakers as long as all information provided is in alignment with the requirements of the HYA (medically accurate, inclusive, and providing both information about abstinence and birth control). Schools may use the “Sexual Health Education Supplemental Materials Evaluation Form,” available on the [HIV/Sexual](http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx) Health Education page of the OSPI website, to assess speaker alignment.**Who is responsible for implementing the Healthy Youth Act?**Implementation of the Healthy Youth Act is a partnership between OSPI and DOH. OSPI is required by law to provide annual updates of the list of reviewed curricula. DOH is available for technical assistance related to medical and scientific accuracy. OSPI and DOH coordinate closely to implement the HYA and to provide support to districts. Districts and schools are responsible for ensuring that their instruction is in alignment with the law.For more information regarding sexuality education programs in Washington schools, contact Laurie Dils, HIV and Sexual Health Education Program Supervisor, at (360) 725-6364, Laurie.dils@k12.wa.us, or TTY (360) 664-3631. <http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx>.  |

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