



California Healthy Youth Act: Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

September 15, 2022

Dear Middle School Parents:

I am writing to inform you about the California Healthy Youth Act 2016 as it pertains to comprehensive sexual health education. Many Californians still have questions regarding this law, and the California Department of Education would like to address these questions in this communication.

The purpose of the California Healthy Youth Act (California *Education Code* [EC] sections 51930–51939) is to provide every student with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health from unintended pregnancy, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Clarification of the law is summarized below:

- The law prohibits active consent for any part of comprehensive sexual health education or HIV prevention education. **Passive** (not active) parent/guardian notification is required for comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education, either at the beginning of the school year or at least 14 days prior to instruction.
- Comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education **are both mandated instruction** and shall occur once in middle school and once in high school. The *EC* defines comprehensive sexual health education as “education regarding human development and sexuality, including education on pregnancy, contraception, and STIs” and HIV prevention education as “instruction on the nature of HIV and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), methods of transmission, strategies to reduce the risk of HIV infection, and social and public health issues related to HIV and AIDS.”
- Abstinence may not be discussed in isolation. The *EC* requires that instruction and materials include information that abstinence is the only certain way to prevent HIV, other STIs, and unintended pregnancy. However, it also states: “Instruction shall provide information about the value of delaying sexual activity while also providing medically accurate information on other methods of preventing HIV and other STIs and pregnancy.” “Abstinence-only” or “Sexual



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- Risk Avoidance Education” sex education, which offers abstinence as the only option for preventing STIs and unintended pregnancy, is not permitted in California public schools or charter schools.
- Instruction shall affirmatively recognize that people have different sexual orientations and, when discussing or providing examples of relationships and couples, must be inclusive of same-sex relationships. It must also teach students about gender, gender expression, and gender identity and explore the harm of negative gender stereotypes. This means that schools must teach about all sexual orientations and what being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) means.
- All instruction and materials must support and align with the purposes of the California Healthy Youth Act and with each other. Instruction and materials may not be in conflict with or undermine each other or any purposes of the law. For example, schools may not use materials that, in promoting abstinence, focus exclusively on the failure rates or perceived disadvantages of condoms or contraception.

As evidenced by data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the California Healthy Youth Act is succeeding in providing students with the knowledge and skills to protect their sexual and reproductive health from unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs. According to the most recently published data from 2019, California high school students report significantly lower rates of sexual activity than high school students nationally, and rates have consistently decreased since implementation of the California Healthy Youth Act in 2016. California has the lowest rate of sexual activity for all 50 states. Further, for California high school students who affirmatively report being sexually active, their rates of contraceptive use have also consistently increased since the passage of the California Healthy Youth Act. California high school students also show an increase in contraceptive use well above the national average.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Sharla E. Smith, School Health Education Consultant, School Health and Safety Office, by phone at 916-319-0914 or by email at shsmith@cde.ca.gov, or visit the California Department of Education Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/se>.

Sincerely,

Tony Thurmond
CA State Superintendent of Public Instruction



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You are invited to participate in a **Family Communication** session where Planned Parenthood will be discussing the benefits of talking to youth about sexuality, tips to start a conversation with your child and how to obtain age-appropriate resources. JLPAA, will be reviewing the in-class topics that will be taught as well as the calendar for the CHYA sessions. **Parents, please select ONE session to attend, either Tuesday or Thursday.**

Below are the Zoom links for each class. As reminder, **all parents/participants will be required to have their cameras on throughout the entire session due to the nature of the subject.**

Tuesday, September 20th

Topic: Family Communication + Curriculum Review w/ Julia Lee Performing Arts Academy

Time: Sep 20, 2022 05:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://pppsw.zoom.us/j/97586437721>

Audio recording, video recording, and/or unauthorized copying of slides is prohibited without written consent from Planned Parenthood. Unauthorized attendance at this video/teleconferencing event and/or meeting is also prohibited.

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Meeting ID: 975 8643 7721

Find your local number: <https://pppsw.zoom.us/j/ab3rbKPY9>

Thursday, September 22nd

Topic: Family Communication + Curriculum Review w/ Julia Lee Performing Arts Academy

Time: Sep 22, 2022 05:30 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://pppsw.zoom.us/j/98252964384>

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Best Regards,

Rachel A. Thomas, Principal

Julia Lee Performing Arts Academy