California Healthy Youth Act

The California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA), which took effect in January 2016, is a law that requires districts to provide students with comprehensive sexual health education, along with information about HIV prevention, at least once in high school and once in middle school.

CHYA goals include educating students to protect their sexual and reproductive health from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as from unintended pregnancy; along with knowledge and skills for healthy attitudes on adolescent growth and development, body image, gender, sexual orientation, relationships, marriage, and family.

Health Education Framework

The 2019 California Health Education Framework for California Public Schools, K–12, is a guidance document that districts may use when developing health education programs for students. The framework provides guidance for teachers and administrators on how to teach California’s 2008 Health Education Content Standards.

Health education, student success in school, and a thriving future for California are linked. Healthy children make better students and better students become healthy, successful adults who are productive members of their communities.

Every school district has the autonomy to choose its own curriculum as long as it meets the state guidelines. If parents have questions or concerns about the specific lessons used in their child’s class, they should contact the school or district. Please visit cde.ca.gov for more information about the California Healthy Youth Act and the California Health Education Framework.
California Healthy Youth Act FAQs

Is teaching comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention required?
Yes. The law requires that students in grades 7-12 receive comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education at least once in middle school and once in high school. Yet, districts under locally elected leadership are tasked with selecting the curriculum and instructional resources (including textbooks).

Can parents opt out of sex education lessons?
Yes. Parents can opt their children out of comprehensive sex education per the law. School districts are required to notify parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days prior to the first day of comprehensive sexual health instruction. To opt-out, parents/guardians must request in writing that their child not participate in the instruction. (EC 51938 (a))

Health Education Framework FAQs

Are districts required to use the framework when developing lessons for students?
No. The California Health Education Framework is a guidance document for teachers and administrators in implementing California’s Health Education Content Standards. No mandates require schools to use the Health Education Framework.

What areas of health education does the framework cover?
The Framework covers six content areas of Health Education: (1) Nutrition and Physical Activity; (2) Growth, Development, and Sexual Health; (3) Injury Prevention and Safety; (4) Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs; (5) Mental, Emotional, and Social Health; as well as (6) Personal and Community Health.

I read that the framework “includes controversial teaching about sexual relations, sexual orientation and gender.”
The Framework does not mandate what should or shouldn’t be taught. It provides guidance in using inclusive classroom language to make all students feel comfortable at school. The Framework helps provide learning environments free from harassment. California results on the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey show students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are twice as likely to be bullied as their peers who identify as heterosexual. Additionally, students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are three times more likely to seriously consider suicide than their peers who identify as heterosexual.

Dispelling myths, breaking down stereotypes, and linking students to resources can help prevent bullying, self-harm, feelings of hopelessness, and serious considerations of suicide.