

## Sexual Health Education Resource Guide

### Purpose Statement and Theory of Action

This document identifies rules and statutes that define comprehensive health education in Vermont, including sexual health education. This document has been compiled to inform and assist School Supervisory Unions and School Districts (SU/SDs) in developing and implementing high-quality sexual health education programs for Vermont students.

This guide, developed by the Agency of Education (AOE) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), is a companion document that includes sexual health education guidance, resources, and information about professional learning for school boards, district leadership, educators, and families. The AOE and VDH believe that if the information and materials in this resource guide are used by school districts and supervisory unions to develop systemic sexual health education curriculum, instruction, and assessment materials then students will be provided high-quality health education that supports their well-being and academic success.

### Background

This section outlines the minimum statutory and rule-based standards that defines what Health Education is in the state of Vermont.

- Statutory:
  - [16 V.S.A. §906](#) requires inclusion of comprehensive health education, to include sexual health education, in a public school's minimum course of study.
  - [16 V.S.A. §§ 131-136](#) lays out the requirements for comprehensive health education in Vermont schools. Of the eleven required topics of instruction, five relate directly to sexual and reproductive health:
    - (1) Body structure and function, including the physical, psychosocial and psychological basis of human development, sexuality, and reproduction.
    - (4) Disease, such as HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as other communicable diseases, and the prevention of disease.
    - (5) Family health and mental health, including instruction that promotes the development of responsible personal behavior.
    - (8) Human growth and development, including understanding physical, emotional, and social health.
    - (11) How to recognize and prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence, including developmentally appropriate instruction about promoting healthy and respectful relationships.
- State Board of Education:
  - As part of the Education Quality Standards, [State Board Rule 2120.5](#) requires that Supervisory Unions (SUs) develop curriculum that is "aligned with the standards approved by the State Board of Education. Each school shall enable students to engage annually in rigorous, relevant and comprehensive

learning opportunities that allow them to demonstrate proficiency in... physical education and health education as defined in 16 V.S.A. §131.”

- The State Board of Education adopted the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s [National Health Education Standards](#) (NHES) in 2015 through rule to be used as a framework for schools to develop a health curriculum that will help ensure that Vermont students acquire knowledge and skills through proficiency-based learning.
  - The NHES identifies eight standards around “what students should know and be able to do by grades 2, 5, 8, and 12 to promote personal, family, and community health.” Standards 1 (knowledge of concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention), 4 (use of interpersonal communication skills), 5 (use of decision-making skills), 7 (ability to practice health enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks), and 8 (ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health) are key elements of comprehensive sex education curriculum, and align with Vermont Law.

## Resources for School Boards and District Leadership

- From 2013-2018, the AOE received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop a range of resources for Supervisory Districts and Supervisory Unions (SD/SUs) to assist with developing health and sexual health education programs and comprehensive sexual health policies and services. As part of the [Vermont Sexual Health and Education Program \(V-SHEP\)](#), the AOE also provided best practices guidance and educator professional development, and worked directly with several school districts to develop their curriculum and policies.
- [Joint Memo from AOE and VDH on Comprehensive Sex Education](#) (2016)
- [HIV Model Policy](#)
- [School and Community Health](#) - Vermont Department of Health Website

## Resources for Educators

This section includes resources for school and community-based educators that teach sexual health education. Some of these resources were developed by the AOE, some by local or national partners.

### General Resources

- [National Sexuality Education Standards](#): Resource to guide curriculum development; these standards are not formally adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education.
- [Example Curriculum Framework for Sexual Health Education](#): This document, developed as part of V-SHEP, spells out exactly what to include in a sexual health curriculum.
- [Full Spectrum: Educators' Guide to Implementing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Sex Ed](#)
- [Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum](#)

- [Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Consent Campaign](#)
- [Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education \(K-12\)](#): These guidelines, developed by a national task force of experts in the fields of adolescent development, health care, and education, provide a framework of the key concepts, topics, and messages that all sexuality education programs would ideally include.

### **Evidence-based Sexual Health Education Curricula**

The following are curricula that have been proven effective, through clinical evaluation, in promoting understanding about healthy sexuality and in reducing adolescent sexual risk behaviors. Evidence-based programs addressing teen sexual and reproductive health will demonstrate positive change on outcomes such as sexual activity (initiation, frequency, number of partners), use of contraception, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancies.

- [ETR](#) researches, develops, implements, evaluates and disseminates programs and strategies to prevent HIV/AIDS and improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes.
- [Get Real](#) - The *Get Real* curriculum emphasizes social and emotional skills as a key component of healthy relationships and responsible decision making. The curriculum is designed for implementation in both middle and high schools. Information provided is medically accurate, age-appropriate and is shown to:
  - Delay initiation of sexual activity among middle school students;
  - Empower parents to be the primary sexuality educators of their children; and
  - Reinforce family communication and improve communication skills for healthy relationships.

These curricula are merely examples of programs that are clear and relatively simple to implement. Your SU/SD may be using a different, evidenced-based curriculum that is of equal educational value.

### **Evidence-informed Curricula**

The following are curricula which are evidence informed, draw on multi-disciplinary research, and reflect best practice in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

- [3R's](#) – A K-12 Sexuality Education Curriculum. Rights, Respect, Responsibility is a curriculum that fully meets the National Sexuality Education Standards. The curriculum seeks to address both the functional knowledge related to sexuality and the specific skills necessary to adopt healthy behaviors.
- [Family Life and Sexual Health \(FLASH\)](#) – The FLASH curriculum is a sex education program for schools in a wide variety of communities.
- [Sexuality Education for People with Developmental Disabilities](#) – This curriculum is accessible to people with differing cognitive abilities and designed for teams of self-advocates, staff, and teachers to co-lead a sexual health education class.

These curricula are merely examples of programs that are clear and relatively simple to implement. Your SU/SD may be using a different, evidenced-informed curriculum that is of equal educational value.

## Community/Family Engagement

This section includes resources that community members and families can access to support sexual health education.

- Vermont Department of Health
  - [Adolescent Sexual Health](#)
  - [Healthy Relationships](#)
  - [School Health](#)
- Society of Adolescent Health and Medicine – [Sexual and Reproductive Health Education Resources for Adolescents and Young Adults](#)
- American Sexual Health Organization – [Resources for Parents](#)

## Professional Development

Looking for training or technical assistance? These resources are hubs for information about professional development for health and sexual health educators.

- [Professional Learning Standards for Sex Education](#): The Professional Learning Standards for Sex Education are the newest set of standards designed to help improve educators' ability to effectively address sexual health education in the classroom. These standards are aligned with the National Sexuality Education Standards.
- Webinar: [Building a Curriculum Framework for Sustainable Sexual Health Education](#)
- [Planned Parenthood of Northern New England's Education and Training Department, Peer Educator Program](#)
- [Outright Vermont: Education and Outreach](#)
- [Sexual Health Professional Development Resources](#)
- [Answer](#): a national organization that provides and promotes access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them through online workshops, webinars, lesson plans and other resources
- Advocates for Youth's [Supportive and Healthy Schools](#) Initiative (the training and technical assistance made available to some SUs in Vermont through V-SHEP)
- [HCET](#) (Health Care Education and Training)
- [Vermont CARES](#) Presentations (HIV/AIDS, risk reduction, sex and gender positive messaging, etc.)
- [Vermont Higher Ed Collaborative – Health Educator Pathway to Licensure](#)
- [Prevent Child Abuse Vermont – Healthy Relationships Project](#)
- [National Teacher Preparation Standards for Sexuality Education](#)
- [Elevatus Training](#) – Addressing Sexuality with People with Developmental Disabilities
- [Vermont Network Against Sexual and Domestic Violence](#)

## **About the Agency of Education and Department of Health**

### **The Vermont Agency of Education**

The Agency of Education implements state and federal laws, policies, and regulations to ensure that all Vermont learners have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities. The Agency accomplishes this mission through the provision of its leadership, support, and oversight of Vermont's public education system.

### **The Vermont Department of Health**

The Health Department's mission is to protect and promote the best health for all Vermonters. The Department of Health has many programs and initiatives that help Vermonters live fuller, healthier lives from birth through old age, through a focus on prevention.