

## The State of Sex Education in Alabama April 2020

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### What are the current sex education requirements for K-12 public schools in Alabama?

- ★ Teaching sex education is not required in all K-12 public schools in Alabama.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ Abstinence must be taught as the *only* completely effective protection from unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.<sup>1</sup> But in 2015, 43.6% of female<sup>2</sup> high school students and 49.5% of male high school students in Alabama reported ever having had sex.<sup>3</sup>
- ★ Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV are talked about in homophobic terms (i.e. AIDS is mentioned, and HIV is not<sup>1</sup>; even though AIDS is not a sexually transmitted infection, it can be acquired as a result of HIV. This indicates the use of scare tactics that are rooted in homophobia and stigma against HIV and AIDS.)
- ★ Sex between a married heterosexual couple must be taught as the expected social standard, and unmarried, school-aged young people are taught to abstain from sex until they are married.<sup>1</sup>
- ★ There is no requirement that course materials and instruction be medically accurate or culturally appropriate.
- ★ Any course materials or instruction must include:
  - An emphasis on the importance of “self-control and ethical conduct” pertaining to sexual behavior.<sup>1</sup>
  - Statistics and information about contraceptive methods and their increase of protection from unintended pregnancy and contraction of sexually transmitted infections.<sup>1</sup>
  - Information on the laws about the financial responsibility associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing, in addition to comprehensive in parenting skills and responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>
  - Information about the laws prohibiting sexual abuse, the need to report sexual abuse, and the legal options available to victims of sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, 11.3% of Black high school students and 8.7% of white high school students in Alabama reported having been physically forced to have sex.<sup>2</sup>
  - Information about how to cope with and reject unwanted physical and verbal sexual exploitation.<sup>1</sup>
  - Methods for resisting unwanted peer pressure,
  - An emphasis on the “fact” that homosexuality is unacceptable to the general public and homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state. When in reality, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled such laws unconstitutional in 2003.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alabama Code Title 16. Education § 16-40A-2 | FindLaw.

<https://codes.findlaw.com/al/title-16-education/al-code-sect-16-40a-2.html>. Accessed November 8, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Where gender binary language is used in this fact sheet, we are citing data where we do not know how data collectors defined those terms. So, we are unsure if and how trans men and women, and non-binary people are accounted for in this data.

<sup>3</sup> SIECUS State Profiles Fiscal Year 2018. <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Alabama-FY18-Final-1.pdf>. Accessed November 8, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

## How can we improve abortion access for young people in Alabama?

Current requirements for sex education in Alabama are sex negative, homophobic, medically inaccurate, culturally incompetent, ineffective, and do not provide the kind of information young people want and need to live happy and healthy sexual lives.

- ★ Contact your legislator asking them to support our sex education bill that would remove stigmatizing and homophobic language and require medical accuracy and cultural competency in Alabama's sex education law.

## Resources

The Community Action Toolkit (CAT)<sup>5</sup> by SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change provides tools to become knowledgeable about sex education, build support in a state or community, implement sound policies, and institute or defend effective sex education programs that support and affirm young people's right to honest information. The Toolkit is designed to serve as a resource for all advocates: students, parents, teachers, school administrators, health professionals, youth-serving professionals, policymakers, and concerned community members.

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<sup>5</sup> SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change, Community Action Toolkit: A guide to advancing sex education in your community, 2018, <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CAT-Sept-2018-Final.pdf>.