

Laws Pertaining to Health Education

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Program Foundation

The Alabama Course of Study: Health Education provides the legal foundation for the minimum content of a locally developed health education curriculum. Using this document, school superintendents direct the development and implementation of the curriculum for schools in their system. Local boards of education approve and make available this curriculum to each teacher and interested citizen. Textbooks are classroom resources selected to complement this document. The state textbook adoption process begins after the Alabama State Board of Education adopts the *Alabama Course of Study: Health Education* (Code of Alabama, 1975: §16-8-28, §16-9-21, §16-12-8, §16-12-9).

Program Implementation

Health education is required in Grades K-8, and one-half credit of health education is required for high school graduation. Instruction in health education must be provided by certified teachers. Additional health education courses may be prescribed by local boards of education

(Code of Alabama, 1975: §16-1-16, §16-23-1, §16-35-5, §16-6B-2(d), §16-6B-2(f)
Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) r. 290-3-1-.02 (8.2)(e-2)).

Program Requirements

Health risk behaviors such as the use of illegal drugs, premarital sexual activity, negligent parenting, and short-term emotional issues that may lead to consideration of suicide have detrimental long-term effects on students. Health education teachers should incorporate concepts embodied in the laws, regulations, and resolutions that follow in all age- and content-appropriate contexts throughout this document.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Education

Students in Grades 5-12 receive instruction about AIDS through the health education program (Alabama State Board of Education Resolution, August 27, 1987, and October 22, 1987, meetings).

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Education

In the required one-half credit high school course, students are to receive instruction in CPR from instructors certified by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross (Code of Alabama, 1975, §16-40-8).

Character Education

The character education program focuses upon the development of courage, patriotism, citizenship, honesty, fairness, respect for others, kindness, cooperation, self-respect, self-control, courtesy, compassion, tolerance, diligence, generosity, punctuality, cleanliness, cheerfulness, school pride, respect for the environment, patience, creativity, sportsmanship, loyalty, and perseverance. These character education traits complement the goals of the Alabama Course of Study: Health Education (Code of Alabama, 1975, §16-6B-2(h); Alabama State Board of Education Resolution, May 25, 1995, meeting).

Drug Abuse Prevention Education

Drug abuse prevention education is provided to all students as part of a comprehensive drug abuse education program. Funding is used from federal, state, local, or private resources. The program is age-appropriate and contains resistance skills and information pertaining to all aspects of illicit drug use, including legal, social, and health consequences. Students may be exempt without penalty from the drug education program if a parent or legal guardian presents to the school principal a signed statement indicating that the teaching of disease, its symptoms, its development and treatment, and the use of instructional aids and materials conflict with the religious preferences of the family (*Code of Alabama*, 1975, §16-41).

Parenting Education

Through existing required courses, students in Grades 7-12 receive instruction in parental responsibilities (Code of Alabama, 1975, §16-40-1.1).

Sex Education

The *Code of Alabama* states:

(a) Any program or curriculum in the public schools in Alabama that includes sex education or the human

reproductive process shall, as a minimum, include and emphasize the following:

- (1) Abstinence from sexual activity is the only completely effective protection against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually.
- (2) Abstinence from sexual activity outside of lawful marriage is the expected social standard for unmarried school-age persons.

The *Code of Alabama* states further that materials and instruction selected and used at the local level shall be age-appropriate; shall emphasize abstinence, refusal skills, ethical conduct, and applicable laws (child support, sexual abuse, and homosexual conduct); and shall include information indicating the reliability and unreliability of contraceptives (*Code of Alabama*, 1975, §16-40A-2).

Spinal Deformity Screening and Education

Students in Grades 5-9 or between the ages of 11-14 are screened for spinal deformities and provided education about scoliosis, kyphosis, and lordosis as well as methods of detection, the purpose of screening, and what to do if a deformity is indicated (*Code of Alabama*, 1975, §16-29; Senate Joint Resolution 62).

Suicide Prevention Education

An awareness program for suicide prevention must be implemented by each school system and must include mental and emotional health education in the one-half credit health education course required for high school graduation (Alabama State Board of Education Resolution, June 12, 1986, meeting).

Minimum Contents to be Included in Sex Education Program or Curriculum

*Code of Alabama, 1975, §16-40A-2**

(a) Any program or curriculum in the public schools in Alabama that includes sexual education or the human reproductive process shall, as a minimum, include and emphasize the following:

(1) Abstinence from sexual activity is the only completely effective protection against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually.

(2) Abstinence from sexual activity outside of lawful marriage is the expected social standard for unmarried school-age persons.

(b) Course materials and instruction that relate to sexual education or sexually transmitted diseases should be age-appropriate.

(c) Course materials and instruction that relate to sexual education or sexually transmitted diseases should include all of the following elements:

(1) An emphasis on sexual abstinence as the only completely reliable method of avoiding unwanted teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

(2) An emphasis on the importance of self-control and ethical conduct pertaining to sexual behavior.

(3) Statistics based on the latest medical information that indicate the degree of reliability and unreliability of various forms of contraception, while also emphasizing the increase in protection against pregnancy and protection against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS infection, which is afforded by the use of various contraceptive measures.

(4) Information concerning the laws relating to the financial responsibilities associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing.

(5) Information concerning the laws prohibiting sexual abuse, the need to report such abuse, and the legal options available to victims of sexual abuse.

(6) Information on how to cope with and rebuff unwanted physical and verbal sexual exploitation by other persons.

(7) Psychologically sound methods of resisting unwanted peer pressure.

(8) An emphasis, in a factual manner and from a public health perspective, that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state.

(9) Comprehensive instruction in parenting skills and responsibilities, including the responsibility to pay child support by non-custodial parents, the penalties for nonpayment of child support, and the legal and ethical responsibilities of child care and child rearing.

*Alabama Law (Regular Session, 1992) Act No. 92-590, Section