

BE THE CHANGE

Advocacy Toolkit For Ensuring Your Local Schools
Provide Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

ACLU
California

BACHE Bay Area Communities
for Health Education

The logo for BACHE features the word "BACHE" in a bold, sans-serif font. Behind the letters, there are silhouettes of a diverse group of people, including a woman with a stroller, a man, and several children, representing a community.

This advocacy toolkit was developed by the ACLU of California and BACHE. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of California was a sponsor of the California Healthy Youth Act and has been working with parents, youth, and educators to ensure quality sexual health education in California schools for over fifteen years. Bay Area Communities for Health Education (BACHE) educates and provides technical assistance to districts, schools, parents, and caregivers to improve communication about sexuality and ensure schools and districts teach legally required comprehensive sexual health education.

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Introduction

Comprehensive sexual health education gives students the knowledge and confidence they need to make healthy decisions, and it leads to improved health and academic outcomes for young people.¹ As well as talking with your children at home, parents, guardians, and community members can play a critical role in supporting students by working with your local schools to make sure they are teaching the fact-based sexual health education students need. California made a commitment to comprehensive sexual health education by passing the California Healthy Youth Act in 2015. But to make the promise of this law a reality in classrooms throughout California, we need parents and community members like you to become advocates.

This toolkit provides you with the information necessary to ensure the implementation of the California Healthy Youth Act in your local schools. Throughout this toolkit, we refer to a more extensive parent-focused toolkit from Bay Area Communities for Health Education (“BACHE Toolkit”), which is accessible at www.bacheinfo.org/toolkit. We also refer to various additional materials and resources from the ACLU of California, accessible at www.aclunc.org/sex_ed. We hope that this toolkit empowers you to make change in your community. With accurate information at school, plus guidance from parents and other trusted sources, young people will have more of what they need to succeed in school—and beyond.

To learn more about California sexual health education, read ACLU’s Parent Fact Sheet and Take Action! sheet.²

About the California Healthy Youth Act

The **California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA)** is our state’s sexual health education law that took effect in 2016.³ CHYA requires that public schools provide students with medically accurate, age-appropriate, LGBTQ-inclusive⁴ comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education, at least once in middle school and once in high school. It ensures that students learn skills for avoiding unhealthy relationships, and it prohibits “abstinence-only” education, which denies young people valuable information for protecting their health.

¹ FUTURE OF SEX EDUCATION (FoSE), *Comprehensive Sex Education: Research and Results* (2009), <http://futureofsexed.org/compsexed.html>.

² Available at www.aclunc.org/sex_ed.

³ CAL. EDUC. CODE §§ 51930-51939, available at http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=4.&title=2.&part=28.&chapter=5.6.&article=1.&goUp=Y.

⁴ Instruction cannot in any way be biased against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ).

GET INFORMATION

Step 1: Access the Policies and Instructional Materials

As a parent, you have the right to review all materials used during classroom instruction relating to sexual health education. These materials can be viewed in the classroom, district office, or sometimes online. Each district has different policies for accessing the materials, so be sure to ask. The [BACHE toolkit](#) has helpful tips on how to get hold of sexual health education materials.

Materials to request include:

- ✓ School board policy and/or administrative regulations that govern sexual health education and HIV prevention education. The typical number for the board policy and corresponding administrative regulation is 6142.1. Most districts have board policies and administrative regulations on their websites.
- ✓ Materials used for providing instruction. These can include curricula, textbooks, supplementary videos, and worksheets. If you don't have time to review all the materials, the primary curriculum will likely give you an indication as to whether the instruction is CHYA-compliant or not.
- ✓ A list of outside agencies that provide the classroom instruction.

EVALUATE FOR COMPLIANCE

Step 2: Evaluate the Policies and Instructional Materials

Compare the school board policy and administrative regulation to CHYA's requirements and make sure they are up to date, accurate, and in alignment with the law. Look at Jefferson ESD's [Board Policy 6142.1](#) and [Administrative Regulation 6142.1](#) for models on sexual health and HIV prevention instruction that align with those issued by the California School Boards Association (CSBA).⁵

Evaluate the school curriculum and other instructional materials using the [Compliance Evaluation Checklist for Districts](#) and the [LGBTQ & Gender](#)

⁵ JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT, BP 6142.1 Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction, *available at* <http://gamutonline.net/district/jeffersonesd/displayPolicy/522730/>; AR 6142.1 and HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction, *available at* <http://gamutonline.net/district/jeffersonesd/displayPolicy/522731/>.

[Inclusiveness Assessment Tool](#). Look at [Curricular Materials & Resources](#) for curricular materials that have made updates to comply with CHYA.⁶

Make sure sexual health education is being provided for all students, including English language learner students, students with developmental or physical disabilities, and students in independent study or continuation school.

Talk with others in your community about the kind of sexual health education students are receiving. Chances are if you are concerned, others may also be. Don't worry, 89% of California parents support comprehensive sexual health education!⁷

If everything looks great, write a letter to the superintendent or administrator explaining that as a committed parent, you are pleased that the school district has taken the necessary steps to provide comprehensive sexual health education at your local school.

NOTE: Just because a district has a good policy and curriculum on the books does not always mean that the policy is being adequately implemented. This is why talking with others in your community, including other parents and supportive school or district staff, is important.

Step 3: Develop a List of Problems and “Asks”

If the policies and instructional materials are outdated, inaccurate, or otherwise not aligned with CHYA, develop a list of problems you see. Some problem areas include instruction that is not sufficiently LGBTQ-inclusive, materials that promote abstinence only, and school board regulations that require parents to actively consent for their students to participate in their sexual health education class.

Based on your list of problems, write up your “asks” or the specific changes you want the school to take to be compliant with CHYA. Potential “asks” can include updating the school board policy, adopting a new curriculum, providing teacher training, removing biased or outdated materials, and more.

- Refer to the Tools and Resources section of the [BACHE Toolkit](#) for a list of typical sexual health education problems found in California schools.

⁶ Available at www.aclunc.org/sex_ed.

⁷ Norman A. Constantine, Petra Jerman, and Alice X. Huang, California Parents' Preferences and Beliefs on School-Based Sexuality Education Policy, *Perspective on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 39, 167-175 (September 2007), available at <http://cshca.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ConstantineParentpreferencessexedpolicy.pdf>.

TAKE ACTION

Step 4: Meet with a School or District Decision-Maker

Schedule to meet with a school or district decision-maker. If the problem is based on one school, schedule a meeting with the school principal. If the problem is district-wide, schedule a meeting with the district superintendent, associate superintendent, or curriculum director.

NOTE: If you live in the San Francisco Bay Area, it's likely that BACHE knows the appropriate person in your district. Contact BACHE@cardeaservices.org for that information.

Bring the list of problems you would like to address, a copy of your “asks,” and some printed resources. The school or district decision-maker should be willing to work with you to implement the changes you want to see. Provide the school or district decision-maker with printed copies of some or all of the resources below.

Resources to share with a school or district decision-maker:

- [Fast Facts about the California Healthy Youth Act](#): Basic facts about CHYA.
- [Questions & Answers for School Districts](#): Comprehensive and technical Q&A document detailing specific requirements of the law, including references to the relevant sections of the Education Code.
- [Compliance Evaluation Checklist](#): Checklist for evaluating curricula against requirements of the law.
- [LGBTQ & Gender Inclusiveness Assessment Tool](#): Evaluation checklist with expanded requirements regarding LGBTQ and gender inclusivity.
- [Curricular Materials & Resources](#): List of curricular materials and resources that have been updated to align with CHYA.
- [Sample Parent/Guardian Notification Letter](#): Sample letter that meets requirement for parental notification and passive consent for participation in sexual health education.

A more extensive list of resources and versions in Spanish can be found at: www.aclunc.org/sex_ed.

NOTE: It is important to meet with a school or district decision-maker *first* before you decide to take any further steps. Going to the school board before meeting with a school or district decision-maker can be seen as working around the district staff. If the school or district decision-maker you meet with is resistant and you feel like you are not making progress in presenting your concerns and requests, then take further action to ensure your concerns are heard.

Step 5: Present to the School Board

Ask the superintendent's office to add you to the school board agenda to present. The school board can override the district staff and superintendent and help you change and adopt policies and curriculum. If you're not on the agenda you can still make a brief presentation during the public comment period.

Arrive prepared to the school board meeting. You should outline your 2-3 minute speech in advance, and prepare a packet of written materials to leave with the school board members after the meeting, including sample policies (refer back to Step 2) and other resources (refer back to Step 4).

Bring a group of mobilized supporters. School board meetings are not typically well attended, so a showing of 5-10 people wearing the same t-shirt or sticker is noticeable. Talk to other allies within your community and online, and develop relationships with community-based organizations to mobilize other parents to support you. If you need support identifying allies in your area, contact us at sexualhealth@acluca.org for ideas.

NOTE: Even if you are making progress with administrators, you may want to present to the school board at some point to go on public record and ensure that the school or district is fully committed to the changes you've requested. Be sure to evaluate the political context of your school district and understand that school board members can be swayed by pressure from both opponents and proponents of change.

Step 6: Use the Media

Amplify your message and increase your impact. The media is a great tool for raising awareness about issues, educating the public, and getting people on your side. It is also a tool for putting pressure on elected officials to enact the changes they need to make. Use the [Parent Fact Sheet](#) as a guide for what to say to the media.

Use the following media:

- ✓ **Social Media:** Write a post on your Facebook or Twitter, linking friends to an article or event, or to the [Parent Fact Sheet](#) and [Take Action!](#) sheet.
 - ✓ **Newspaper:** Identify a local or state print or online newspaper that will be supportive of your position. Write an op-ed piece, a letter to the editor, or pitch a story to a reporter.
 - ✓ **Radio:** Reach out to your local public radio news program and call in to talk shows.
- Refer to the Tools and Resources section of the [BACHE Toolkit](#) for tips on using the media.

NOTE: The media can be a double-edged sword, so use it wisely. Make sure that everything you say is backed by facts.

Step 7: Tell Us What You're Doing!

Don't forget to tell us what you're doing!

Contact the ACLU of California at sexualhealth@acluca.org to let us know how this toolkit has helped you, and what steps you have taken to advocate for comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education at your local school or district. Remember, if you live in the San Francisco Bay Area, it's likely that BACHE can help you. Contact BACHE at BACHE@cardeaservices.org.

If you have further questions about what action to take, or what resources are available, refer to [ACLU's sex education web page](#)⁸ and [BACHE's web page for parents](#).⁹

⁸ Available at www.aclunc.org/sex_ed.

⁹ Available at www.bacheinfo.org/parents/.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Reach out to local youth or parent-serving organizations for support advocating for compliance to CHYA. [GSA Network](#),¹⁰ which has clubs in many schools, is a great organization for connecting with students who are committed to CHYA.

You can find other valuable resources from the following organizations:

- [California Latinas for Reproductive Justice](#) has materials on advocating for improved sexual health education within the Latina/o/x community.¹¹
- [Forward Together](#) has resources for engaging Asian and Pacific Islander communities in dialogue and action around comprehensive sexual health education.¹²
- [SIECUS](#),¹³ [Advocates for Youth](#),¹⁴ and [Planned Parenthood](#)¹⁵ have materials on the value of sexual health education and how to establish good parent-child communication about sexual health topics. Your local Planned Parenthood affiliate can also be a valuable resource. Find the affiliates in California [here](#).¹⁶

¹⁰ GSA NETWORK, <https://gsanetwork.org/>.

¹¹ CALIFORNIA LATINAS FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, Sex Ed Action Kit, <http://www.californialatinas.org/resources/sex-ed-action-kit/#>.

¹² FORWARD TOGETHER, Transforming API Communities: Tools for Sexuality Education https://forwardtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Tools_for_SexEd_2018R4.pdf.

¹³ SIECUS, <http://www.siecus.org>.

¹⁴ ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH, <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>.

¹⁵ PLANNED PARENTHOOD, What is Sex Education?, <https://plannedparenthood.org/learn/for-educators/what-sex-education>.

¹⁶ Available at <http://ppactionca.org/local-info/>.

THIS RESOURCE WAS DEVELOPED BY THE ACLU OF CALIFORNIA AND BAY AREA COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH EDUCATION

To learn more, visit the ACLU of California's Sex Education web page at www.aclunc.org/sex_ed and BACHE's website at www.bacheinfo.org.

These sites provide helpful information and resources for parents, school districts, and other education advocates.