

# Comprehensive Sexual Health Education & the California Healthy Youth Act

## PARENT FACT SHEET

### What is the California Healthy Youth Act?

The California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA)<sup>1</sup> is our state's sexual health education law, which took effect January 1, 2016. CHYA requires that public schools provide students with medically accurate, age-appropriate, LGBTQ-inclusive<sup>2</sup> comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education, at least once in middle school and once in high school. It ensures that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy decisions.

### What does the California Healthy Youth Act do?

We all want the best education for students, and that means giving students relevant and accurate information about the changes their bodies go through and how to tackle big issues like consent, puberty, and relationships. Luckily, CHYA ensures your student is provided with the high quality sexual health education they need.

- ✓ ***Instruction must be medically accurate*** and provide information about preventing sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy. Without facts, young people often repeat what they hear from friends or find on the internet, which may be inaccurate and cause confusion. Studies show that science-based comprehensive sexual health education, when it supports a diverse range of young people, helps students become healthier and more successful adults. It leads to lower STI rates, fewer unplanned pregnancies, better self-esteem, healthier relationships, and many more benefits.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ ***Instruction must be age appropriate.*** Human development is a lifelong process. Young people need to receive information at the right time so that they aren't caught off guard by their changing bodies and are prepared for healthy relationships and safe sex when and if they're ready for those steps. Just because young people are learning about sex doesn't mean they're having it. In fact, young people who receive comprehensive sexual health education generally start having sex later in life and have lower rates of unplanned pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CAL. EDUC. CODE §§ 51930-51939, *available at*

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=4.&title=2.&part=28.&chapter=5.6.&article=1.&goUp=Y](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayexpandedbranch.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=4.&title=2.&part=28.&chapter=5.6.&article=1.&goUp=Y).

<sup>2</sup> Instruction cannot in any way be biased against people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ).

<sup>3</sup> FUTURE OF SEX EDUCATION (FoSE), *Comprehensive Sex Education: Research and Results* (2009), <http://www.futureofsexed.org/compsexed.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

- ✓ ***Instruction must be LGBTQ-inclusive.*** Our schools are diverse, and every student deserves to feel safe, welcome, and acknowledged at school. LGBTQ students thrive when they see themselves reflected in lessons, and LGBTQ-inclusive lessons create a positive effect on all students and help prevent bullying, discrimination, and harassment.<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ ***Instruction must be appropriate for and equally available to English language learners and students with physical and developmental disabilities.*** These students may need materials in their home language and/or modified formats to ensure they can fully participate in and benefit from the instruction.

## What is the role of parents and guardians?

Let's face it: talking about sex in school can catch parents off guard, especially when it's a change from their own experiences or new for the school. You play an indispensable role in preparing your student for the future, and the comprehensive sexual health education your student receives will open the door for important conversations. These conversations at home will add to and complement the science-based instruction your student receives in school, just as you might help them with math, biology, or history homework.

As a parent or guardian, you should be notified when your student will receive sexual health education at their school and be allowed to view the curriculum and other instructional materials prior to instruction. You can choose to withdraw your student from instruction, but you should know that the education community – including the California PTA – and the vast majority of California parents support fact-based comprehensive sexual health education because they know it has many benefits for students. With accurate instruction at school, plus guidance from parents and other trusted sources, we can help young people grow into healthier and more successful adults.



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<sup>5</sup> See Joseph G. Kosciw, et al., *The 2015 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*, GLSEN, available at <https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey>; and GLSEN, 2015 State Snapshot: School Climate in California, available at <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/California%20State%20Snapshot%20-%20NSCS.pdf>.