



## Healthy Youth Act Frequently Asked Questions

The 2007 Legislature passed [ESSB 5297](#) relating to medically and scientifically accurate sexual health education in schools. This law is also known as the Healthy Youth Act (HYA).

### How does the Healthy Youth Act change what sexuality education schools provide?

The Healthy Youth Act does not require schools to provide sexuality education. However, if a school does provide such instruction the school **must assure that the instruction:**

- Is medically and scientifically accurate.
- Is age appropriate.
- Is appropriate for students regardless of gender, race, disability status, or sexual orientation.
- Includes information about abstinence **and** other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

### Can outside abstinence speakers provide presentations in schools?

Schools may offer presentations on abstinence in a separate session as long as the presentations are preceded or followed with instruction regarding other methods of birth control and disease prevention **and** as long as all information is medically and scientifically accurate.

### Who determines medical and scientific accuracy?

Medically and scientifically accurate means information that is verified or supported by research in compliance with scientific methods, is published in peer reviewed journals and is recognized as accurate by objective professional organizations and agencies with expertise in the field of sexual health, including the American college of obstetricians and gynecologists, the Washington state Department of Health (DOH) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### When will schools be required to comply with the HYA?

Schools will be required to comply with the HYA by September, 2008.

### What if our school district is still in the process of identifying the program/s and materials to be used after September, 2008?

Districts can implement their adopted program/s and materials anytime during the year. The law does not allow for continued use of programs that are not medically and scientifically accurate after that date.

### **Will schools have to use a specific curriculum?**

No. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and state Department of Health (DOH) will conduct a review of commonly used sexuality education programs in Washington schools. The review will be based on the 2005 Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention, produced by OSPI and DOH. These programs will also be reviewed for medical and scientific accuracy. This list and the findings from the review process will be posted on both agencies' websites.

### **Can schools use materials that have not been reviewed by OSPI and DOH?**

All speakers, curriculum and materials used must comply with the requirements for medical and scientific accuracy as determined by the DOH and be consistent with the 2005 Guidelines. OSPI has provided a template based on the 2005 Guidelines to assist schools in reviewing their curriculum. This template may be found at [www.k12.wa.us/curriculum/instruct/healthfitness](http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculum/instruct/healthfitness).

Materials that have not been reviewed/approved for medical and scientific accuracy may be submitted to:

Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator  
Washington State Department of Health  
PO Box 47880  
Olympia, WA 98504-7880  
360-586-7868

### **Can students be excused from sexuality education instruction?**

Yes, schools must make sexuality education curriculum and other presentations available for parents to preview and parents may submit a written request to have their child excused from the program.

For more information regarding sexuality education programs in Washington Schools, contact Pam Tollefsen, School Health Programs Coordinator, at 360/725-6364, [pam.tollefsen@k12.wa.us](mailto:pam.tollefsen@k12.wa.us), or TTY 360-664-3631.