

Fast Facts about California's Sexual Health Education and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Law

In January 2004, California's new law (SB 71) covering sex education and HIV/AIDS prevention education in public schools went into effect. As a parent, student, or community member, you may want to know the following facts about the law.

- **Sex education is not required. HIV/AIDS prevention education is required once in middle school and once in high school.**
- **If schools offer sex education, they cannot provide an abstinence-only program.** Abstinence-only education presents abstinence as the only option for preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases; the law requires that other methods be included. Many abstinence-only programs are religious in nature; sex education cannot promote any religious ideas.
- **Sex education must be medically accurate, age-appropriate, and, starting in 7th grade must cover abstinence, effectiveness and safety of contraception, protection from sexually transmitted diseases, and decision-making.** This means that if schools are offering sex ed, they must cover these subjects. They must look to trusted sources of information, like the American Academy of Pediatrics, to determine medical accuracy. All pregnancy and STD prevention devices that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration must be covered.
- **Parents must be notified that their child will have sex education or HIV/AIDS education and be allowed to see the materials before the classes start.** If parents don't want their children to take the class they must request that in writing.
- **Teachers of both HIV/AIDS education and sexual health education must be trained in the subject.** Schools may use outside organizations or speakers, if they have training, but those organizations must also follow the laws when they present.
- **English language learners and students with disabilities must get sex education and HIV/AIDS education that is right for them.** Schools must make sure that all students can get sexual health education and HIV/AIDS prevention education in a way that works for them.
- **Sex education must respect and address the needs of students of all sexual orientations.**

These facts are just a brief overview of the new law. For more in-depth information, download the SB 71 question and answer guide for parents, students, and community members from http://www.aclunc.org/issues/reproductive_rights/index.shtml. If you are concerned that your school is not following the law, contact the ACLU or your local Planned Parenthood for help.