

Frequently Asked Questions
Regarding
Human Growth and Development Instruction in Wisconsin Schools 118.019

What new school district requirements exist based on recent changes to the law?

The revised Human Growth and Development statute, Wis. Stats. sec. 118.019, effective April 6, 2012 lessens some requirements for content taught but adds other required topics. The law establishes new requirements for advisory committee membership and information to be included in parental notification.

If school districts are providing human growth and development instruction based on previous Human Growth and Development requirements, do we need to do something different now?

Yes. The 2012 revisions to statute slightly alter the list of content to be included in human growth and development instruction, however it also made much of the list 'recommended' rather than mandated.

The **new** required subjects include:

- Emphasis on abstinence as the only reliable way to prevent pregnancy and STD's, including HIV and AIDS.
- Medically accurate information about HIV and AIDS.
- Pregnancy, prenatal development and childbirth.
- The socio-economic benefits of marriage

For a more complete side-by-side of subjects recommended and required, see the [Human Growth and Development Comparison Chart](#).

What topics are now required?

If a district provides instruction on any of the recommended topics listed in the law, the following topics must also be addressed as part of the same course, during the same year:

- Abstinence as the only reliable way to prevent pregnancy and STD's
- Medically accurate information about HPV, HIV and AIDS
- Pregnancy, prenatal development and childbirth
- Parental responsibility and the socio-economic benefits of marriage
- Abstinence as the preferred choice of behavior for non-married students
- Criminal penalties for engaging in sexual activity involving a child
- Sex offender registration requirements

Are school districts now required to teach abstinence only?

No. The statute requires that instruction continues to stress the value of abstinence as the only reliable way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but does not prohibit instruction on risk reduction strategies. The purpose of human growth and development is lifelong health. School boards can continue to make decisions about what knowledge and skills are appropriate for students based on data and the norms and values of the community.

What about the subjects in our current curriculum which are not included in the new law?

There is nothing in the new law that prohibits you from teaching a more comprehensive curriculum. However it does require you to teach all of the required topics listed in section 2m as part of the same course during the same year. Many of these subjects were already included in the list of required subjects.

What is the relationship of this new language and the Wisconsin educational goals and expectations?

The new law references 118.01 which identifies educational goals and expectations of public education, and requires that each school board provides an instructional program designed to give pupils knowledge of the human body and the means to maintain lifelong health. Content listed includes instruction on sexually transmitted infections in high school and protective behaviors (child sexual abuse prevention) in elementary schools.

Public health nurses or other local agency health educators often teach part of the human growth and development curriculum. Is that still allowed?

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Yes, if they are compensated for this instruction. It is now prohibited to use volunteer health care providers to teach human growth and development in schools. However, a volunteer health care provider is defined as “an individual who receives no income from the practice of his or her health care profession or who receives no income from the practice of that health care profession when providing services at...a school” (146.89 1r). Since most community agencies pay their health education staff to provide this service to schools, they are not considered volunteers. Schools should continue to form collaborations with community organizations that can provide culturally relevant resources and meet the needs of their students.

What are the new requirements for the Advisory Committee?

The revised statute creates new requirements for the configuration of the district advisory committee. As under previous law, membership must include parents, teachers, school administrators, students, health care professionals, members of clergy and other residents of the school district. There are now restrictions on membership. No category other than parents can be more than one-fifth of the membership. School or district staff (and their families) can make up no more than one quarter of the membership. The school board is still responsible for appointing this now ‘ad hoc’ committee. The role of the committee is still advisory.

How often must districts review their human growth and development curriculum?

Previously review was required every three years. The revised statute does not require regular curriculum review. However it is still advised to update the curriculum and instructional materials on a regular basis to keep them accurate and relevant.

Are there new requirements for parent notification under this law?

No. Parental notification must still include an explanation on how to opt a student out of human growth and development instruction. This isn’t a new requirement

Are there new requirements for students whose parents opt them out of human growth and development instruction?

No. Both 118.109 (Human Growth and Development) and 118.01(2)(d)2c (Health Education) permit students to be exempted from instruction on human growth and development required content and/or on physiology and hygiene, STD’s, symptoms of disease and the proper care of the body if his or her parent files a written request with the teacher or school principal. Students must be given an alternative assignment if missing this content would affect their passing a class required for graduation.

Can districts separate students by gender for human growth and development instruction?

Yes. The revised statute permits human growth and development instruction to be provided with students separated by gender. However, this separation is not required. Little is known about the effectiveness or unintended consequences of separate gender human growth and development instruction. It could result in reinforcing gender stereotypes that may lead to risky sexual behavior.

How accessible must a district make the HGD curriculum to parents?

School districts must make the complete human growth and development curriculum available for parents to review upon request at any time. In addition, districts providing human growth and development instruction should send an outline of the curriculum used in the pupil’s grade level annually to each family.

How does the medical accuracy definition change the curriculum selection process?

The current law truncates the widely accepted definition of medical accuracy. The Department of Public Instruction will continue to provide resources and technical assistance to schools looking for instructional materials to meet the new requirements based on the previous definition of medical accuracy in compliance with the many federal funding sources that support DPI staff assisting Wisconsin districts.

How does this focus on abstinence until marriage impact gay and lesbian students or students who are already sexually active?

The new law still contains a statement of nondiscrimination based on a pupil's race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic or cultural background or against sexually active pupils or children with disabilities. If a school district chooses to teach an abstinence-centered curriculum, they will still need to make the messages relevant for all of those pupils listed.