Healthy Youth Act Frequently Asked Questions

In September, 2008, the Healthy Youth Act went into effect. This law relates to medically and scientifically accurate sexual health education in schools. The law is also known as the Healthy Youth Act. (HYA)

What are the requirements of the Healthy Youth Act?
The Healthy Youth Act does not mandate schools to provide sexual health 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.
- Is consistent with the 2005 Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention.

What does ‘medically and scientifically accurate’ mean?
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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

How can schools determine if their sexual health curriculum is consistent with the 2005 guidelines?
Districts are strongly encouraged to utilize the curriculum planning guide located on the Health and Fitness page of the OSPI website to assess the comprehensive nature of their sexual health curriculum, to determine where gaps exist, and to identify resources to fill those gaps.

Can parents review sexual health education materials?
Yes. At least one month before teaching a program in sexual health education, schools must provide notice to parents of the planned instruction and the availability of materials for inspection.

Can students be excused from sexuality education instruction?
Yes. Parents who wish to excuse their child from planned instruction in sexual health education may do so by submitting a written request. Parents should contact their school or district for the specific procedure.

For more information regarding sexuality education programs in Washington schools, contact Laurie Dils, Sexual Health Education Program Supervisor, at (360) 725-6364, Laurie.dils@k12.wa.us or TTY (360) 664-3631. http://www.k12.wa.us/HIVSexualhealth/default.aspx.

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