

# Family Life Education

Board of Education Guidelines and  
Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools



Commonwealth of Virginia  
Department of Education  
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Revised  
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## ***CODE OF VIRGINIA FOR FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION***

### **§22.1-207.1. Family life education.**

A. As used in this section, “abstinence education” means an educational or motivational component that has as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by teenagers’ abstaining from sexual activity before marriage.

B. The Board of Education shall develop by Standards of Learning and curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential family life education curriculum in grades kindergarten through 12. Such curriculum guidelines shall include instruction as appropriate for the age of the student in family living and community relationships; the benefits, challenges, responsibilities, and value of marriage for men, women, children, and communities; the value of family relationships; abstinence education; the value of postponing sexual activity; the benefits of adoption as a positive choice in the event of an unwanted pregnancy; human sexuality; human reproduction; the prevention of human trafficking; dating violence; the characteristics of abusive relationships; steps to take to deter sexual assault, the availability of counseling and legal resources, and, in the event of such sexual assault, the importance of immediate medical attention and advice, as well as the requirements of the law; the etiology, prevention, and effects of sexually transmitted diseases; and mental health education and awareness.

C. All such instruction shall be designed to promote parental involvement, foster positive self-concepts and provide mechanisms for coping with peer pressure and the stresses of modern living according to the students' developmental stages and abilities. The Board shall also establish requirements for appropriate training for teachers of family life education, which shall include training in instructional elements to support the various curriculum components.

1987, c. 371; 1999, c. 422; 2002, c. 554; 2004, c. 1030; 2007, c. 32.; 2008, c.0417; 2009, c.437, 583; 2017, c. 692; 2019, c.595.

### **§ 22.1-207.1:1 Family life education; certain curricula and Standards of Learning.**

Any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall require the Standards of Learning objectives related to dating violence and the characteristics of abusive relationships to be taught at least once in middle school and at least twice in high school, as described in the Board of Education’s family life education guidelines

A. Any high school family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on (i) the prevention of dating violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, including sexual harassment using electronic means, sexual violence, and human trafficking; and (ii) the law and meaning of consent. Such age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of sexual violence may include instruction that increases student awareness of the fact that consent is required before sexual activity.

B. Any family life education curriculum offered in any elementary school, middle school, or high school shall incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the importance of the personal privacy and personal boundaries of other individuals and tools for a student to use to ensure that he respects the personal privacy and personal boundaries of other individuals.

C. Any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the harmful physical and emotional effects of female genital mutilation; associated criminal penalties; and the rights of the victim, including any civil action pursuant to § 8.01-42.5.

D. Any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division may incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention, recognition, and awareness of child abduction, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, and child sexual abuse.

2011, c. 634; 2016, c. 434; 2017, cc.299, 692, 2018, cc. 383,519; 2019, cc.372, 595, 596.

**§ 22.1-207.2. Right of parents to review certain materials; summaries distributed on request.**

Every parent, guardian or other person in the Commonwealth having control or charge of any child who is required by § 22.1-254 A to send such child to a public school shall have the right to review the complete family life curricula, including all supplemental materials used in any family life education program. A complete copy of all printed materials and a description of all audio-visual materials shall be kept in the school library or office and made available for review to any parent or guardian during school office hours before and during the school year. The audio-visual materials shall be made available to parents for review, upon request, on the same basis as printed materials are made available.

Each school board shall develop and distribute to parents or guardians of a student participating in the family life education program a summary designed to assist parents in understanding the program implemented in its school division as such program progresses and to encourage parental guidance and involvement in the instruction of the students. Such information shall reflect the curricula of the program as taught in the classroom. The school division shall include the following information on the summary:

"Parents and guardians have the right to review the family life education program offered by their school division, including written and audio-visual educational materials used in the program. Parents and guardians also have the right to excuse their child from all or part of family life education instruction."

1989, c. 515; 1991, cc. 139, 526; cc. 0451; 2009, cc. 451.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1987, §22.1-207.1 of the *Code of Virginia* was amended to direct the Board of Education to develop standards of learning and curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential family life education (FLE) curriculum in grades K through 12. From February 1987 to December 1987, individuals from public schools (including administrators and teachers), state agencies, parent groups, and not-for-profit organizations that provided family life services contributed time, resources, and expertise to help develop a report to submit to the Virginia General Assembly. The report *Family Life Education: Board of Education's Response to House Bill No. 1413* included sections on the Board of Education guidelines for setting up a required FLE program, Standards of Learning objectives and descriptive statements for grades kindergarten through 12, guidelines for training individuals that teach FLE and for involving parents and community-based organizations in the local FLE program.

The FLE program was funded by the General Assembly during its 1988 session based on the plan developed by the Board of Education and the Department of Education. The program scheduled for implementation by all school divisions during the 1989-1990 school year, provided guidance to localities in developing comprehensive, age-appropriate, and sequential instruction in specific content areas. Program flexibility allowed options for the local planning teams. The program could cover grades K through 10 or K through 12, depending upon the desires of a school division. School divisions were permitted to use state-approved Standards of Learning objectives or develop their own learner objectives. Educators identified as FLE teachers participated in in-depth staff development workshops over a two-year period.

Each school division was required to appoint a community involvement team to assist in the development of the program and to promote community involvement. The Board of Education guidelines were written to assure that parents had opportunities to review the program annually and to opt their children out of all or part of the program.

During the fall and winter of school year 1992-1993, the Department of Education conducted a study of the FLE program in the Virginia public schools. The study resulted from an agreement between the 1992 General Assembly and the Department of Education. A self-report survey of FLE programs was repeated in 2004 and 2006. Results again indicated compliance with mandates and policies. Of the 132 school divisions serving students in the state, 120 divisions, or 91 percent, responded to the 2006 survey. Eighty-eight percent, or 105, of school divisions surveyed in 2006 offered FLE programming.

Also in 1992, the Virginia General Assembly amended §22.1-275.1 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct local school boards to establish a school health advisory board of no more than 20 members. The legislation specified that the local board shall consist of broad-based community representation including, but not limited to, parents, students, health professionals, educators, and others. Many localities opted for their school health advisory board to also serve as the FLE community involvement team.

In September 1997, the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (8 VAC 20-131-170)* were amended by the Board of Education to state that “Each school may implement the Standards of Learning for the Family Life Education program promulgated by the Board of Education or a Family Life Education program consistent with the guidelines developed by the Board of Education which shall have the goals of reducing the incidence of pregnancy and/or sexually-transmitted disease and substance abuse among teenagers.”

The 1999 Virginia General Assembly amended §22.1-207.1 of the *Code of Virginia* and added “abstinence education” as a Family Life Education instructional topic to the content areas identified in 1987: “...family living and community relationships, the value of postponing sexual activity, human sexuality, human reproduction, and the etiology, prevention and effects of sexually transmitted diseases.” The Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Department of Health cooperated to strengthen abstinence education staff development workshops.

House Bill 1206, passed by the 2002 Virginia General Assembly, required the Board of Education to include “the benefits of adoption as a positive choice in the event of an unwanted pregnancy” in its curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum. The bill also required the Board to specify that training of teachers of Family Life Education include training in instructional elements to support the various curriculum components.

House Bill 1015, passed by the 2004 Virginia General Assembly, required the Board of Education to include “steps to take to avoid sexual assault, and the availability of counseling and legal resources, and, in the event of such sexual assault, the importance of immediate medical attention and advice, as well as the requirements of the law” in its curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum.

House Bill 1916, passed by the 2007 Virginia General Assembly, required the Board of Education to include “dating violence and the characteristics of abusive relationships” in its curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum.

Senate Bill 640, passed by the 2008 Virginia General Assembly, required the Board of Education to include “mental health education and awareness” in its curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum.

House Bill 1746 and Senate Bill 827, passed by the 2009 Virginia General Assembly, required the Board of Education to include “benefits, challenges, responsibilities, and value of marriage for men, women, children, and communities” in its curriculum guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential Family Life Education curriculum.

House Bill 1980, also passed by the 2009 Virginia General Assembly, required school divisions to provide parents and guardians of students participating in a family life education program a summary to assist in understanding the program being implemented. The summary should include the following statement: "Parents and guardians have the

right to review the family life education program offered by their school division, including written and audio-visual educational materials used in the program. Parents and guardians also have the right to excuse their child from all or part of family life education instruction."

In an effort to align with the Student Conduct Policy Guidelines, information regarding the appropriate use of electronic devices was also added to Family Life Education program in 2010.

A technical review of the Guidelines and Standards of Learning for Family Life Education was conducted in November of 2010 by a team of Family Life Education professionals. Nursing, education and public health representatives from the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University and George Mason University formed the team. Technical changes have been made to the standards to conform to current terminology.

In 2011, the Virginia General Assembly enacted the uncodified § 1 of Chapter 634 in the *Acts of the General Assembly* stating, "That any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division shall require the Standards of Learning objectives related to dating violence and the characteristics of abusive relationships to be taught at least once in middle school and at least twice in high school, as described in the Board of Education's family life education guidelines." The guidelines and standards, while in compliance with this legislation, have been revised, where appropriate, to further reflect this requirement.

House Bill 659, passed by the 2016 Virginia General Assembly, required the Virginia Board of Education to include objectives related to dating violence and the characteristics of abusive relationships at least once in middle-school and at least twice in high school, as described in the Board's family life guidelines. The 2016 revisions also included requirements in House Bill 659 that any high school family life education curriculum offered by a local school division incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of dating violence, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

In 2017 the Virginia General Assembly amended § 22.1-207.1. Family life education to emphasize the meaning of abstinence education and directed the Board of Education to include the value of family relationships and steps to deter sexual assault in the Standards of Learning and curriculum guidelines. In the same year § 22.1-207.1:1 Family life education; certain curricula and Standards of Learning, which is focused on dating violence and characteristics of abusive relationships, was amended. It added that the prevention of sexual violence curricula may include instruction that increases student awareness that consent is required before sexual activity.

In 2018, the Virginia General Assembly passed Senate Bill 101. This bill requires any high school family life curriculum offered by a local school division to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of sexual harassment using electronic means. The bill also permits any family life education

curriculum offered by a local school division to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention, recognition, and awareness of child abduction, child abuse, child sexual exploitation, and child sexual abuse.

House Bill 45, also passed by the 2018 Virginia General Assembly, requires any family life education curriculum offered by any elementary school, middle school, or high school to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the importance of personal privacy and personal boundaries of other individuals and tools for a student to use to ensure that he respects the personal privacy and personal boundaries of other individuals.

In 2019, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 2205. This bill requires any high school family life education curriculum offered by a school division to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the law and meaning of consent.

The Virginia General Assembly also passed Senate Bill 1159 and Senate Bill 1141 in 2019. Senate Bill 1159 requires any family life education curriculum offered by a local school division to include age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the harmful and emotional effects of female genital mutilation, associated criminal penalties, and the rights of the victim including any civil action. Senate Bill 1141 requires that family life education curriculum guidelines include instruction on the prevention of human trafficking. Additionally, any high school family life education program is required to incorporate age-appropriate elements of effective and evidence-based programs on the prevention of human trafficking.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES FOR FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

- I. The following guidelines shall be followed in the implementation of the Board of Education's approved Family Life Education program.
  - A. A community involvement team, or school health advisory board, shall be identified and should include individuals such as a person from the central office, an elementary school principal, a middle school principal, a high school principal, teachers, a school board member, parents, one or more members of the clergy, a member of the medical profession, and others in the community.
  - B. There must be evidence of broad-based community involvement and an annual opportunity for parents and others to review curriculum and instructional materials prior to the beginning of actual instruction.
  - C. Those individuals selected by the localities to teach the Family Life Education program shall participate in the training program sponsored by the Department of Education.
  - D. Medical professionals and mental health professionals may be involved, where appropriate, to help teach the content of the Family Life Education curriculum and to serve as a resource to students and to parents.
  - E. Local training and follow-up activities shall involve the community in understanding and implementing the Family Life Education program.
  - F. Local agencies/organizations/support systems shall be identified and used as resources for the Family Life Education program.
  - G. An "opt-out" procedure shall be provided to ensure communication with the parent or guardian for permission for students to be excused from all or part of the program.
  - H. A plan for teaching sensitive content in gender-separated classes shall be announced publicly.
  - I. The *Family Life Education Standards of Learning* objectives approved by the Board of Education shall be used by the local school board. However, local school divisions may reassign the grade designation of the Standards of Learning objectives within grades K-6. The grade designation for objectives within grades 7-12 may be reassigned only one grade level, up or down. Also, the program may be adopted for kindergarten through grade 10 or kindergarten through grade 12; however, local scheduling of Family Life Education shall avoid any interruption or detracting from instruction in basic



skills in elementary schools or in those courses required for graduation in the secondary schools.

- J. The curriculum shall include education about those sections of statutory law applicable to instructional units relating to sexual conduct and misconduct and legal provisions relating to family life. This would include using any electronic devices to convey inappropriate behaviors and/or images.
  - K. The curriculum shall include mental health education and awareness as applicable to instructional units relating to family life.
  - L. The curriculum shall include information outlining the benefits, challenges, responsibilities, and value of marriage for men, women, children, and communities.
- II. The following guidelines shall be followed in the implementation of the Family Life Education program developed locally.
- A. The Family Life Education program developed locally shall be comprehensive and sequential and include the following content areas and may include others at the discretion of the local school board:
    - 1. Family living and community relationships;
    - 2. The value of family relationships;
    - 3. The value of postponing sexual activity;
    - 4. Abstinence education;
    - 5. The benefits, challenges, responsibilities, and the value of marriage for men, women, children, and communities;
    - 6. Human sexuality;
    - 7. Human reproduction;
    - 8. The benefits of adoption as a positive choice in the event of an unintended pregnancy;
    - 9. The etiology, prevention, and effects of sexually transmitted diseases;
    - 10. The prevention of human trafficking;
    - 11. Dating violence, which shall include a focus on informing high school students that consent is required before a sexual act, the characteristics of abusive relationships, steps to take to deter a

sexual assault, the availability of counseling and legal resources, and, in the event of sexual assault, the importance of receiving immediate medical attention and advice, as well as the requirements of the law; and

12. Mental health education and awareness.

B. The Family Life Education program developed locally shall include and adhere to the following:

1. A community involvement team, or school health advisory board, shall be identified and should include individuals such as a person from the central office, an elementary school principal, a middle school principal, a high school principal, teachers, a school board member, parents, one or more members of the clergy, a member of the medical profession, a mental health practitioner, and others in the community.
2. There must be evidence of broad-based community involvement and an annual opportunity for parents and others to review curriculum and instructional materials prior to the beginning of actual instruction.
3. Those individuals selected by the localities to teach the local Family Life Education program shall participate in the training program sponsored by the Department of Education. The training program shall include training in instructional elements to support the various curriculum components.
4. A Family Life Education leader from each grade level shall be identified to assist in training individuals who will be teaching, to work with a community involvement team or school health advisory board, and to assist in program implementation and evaluation.
5. Medical and mental health professionals may be involved, where appropriate, to help teach the content of the Family Life Education curriculum and to serve as a resource to students and to parents.
6. Local training and follow-up activities shall involve the community in understanding and implementing the Family Life Education program.
7. Local agencies/organizations/support systems shall be identified and used as resources for the Family Life Education program.
8. An "opt-out" procedure shall be provided to ensure communication with the parent or guardian for permission for students to be excused from all or part of the program.

9. A plan for teaching sensitive content in gender-separated classes shall be announced publicly.
10. Local scheduling of Family Life Education, to include kindergarten through grade 10 or kindergarten through grade 12, shall avoid any interruption or detraction from instruction in the basic skills in the elementary schools or in those courses required for graduation in the secondary schools.
11. A local curriculum plan shall use as a reference the *Family Life Education Standards of Learning* objectives approved by the Board of Education and shall provide age-appropriate, medically-accurate instruction in relation to students' developmental stages and abilities.
12. The local curriculum shall be consistent with the guidelines set forth in section [§22.1-207.1](#) and curriculum components identified in section [§22.1-207.1:1](#) of the *Code*.

## FOURTH GRADE

- 4.1 The student will be able to identify the human reproductive organs.**  
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is placed on the male reproductive organs: penis, testicles, scrotum, and urethra; and on the female reproductive organs: uterus, ovaries, vagina, and fallopian tubes.
- 4.2 The student will identify physical changes that begin to occur during puberty.**  
Descriptive Statement: The individual differences in growth patterns associated with male and female sexual changes are presented. Male characteristics presented include: increased width of shoulders, increased length of arms and legs, the pituitary gland that controls physical growth through hormones, the appearance of pubic and axillary hair, and changes in the voice. Female characteristics presented include: increased width and roundness of hips, development of breasts, the pituitary gland that controls physical growth through hormones, the appearance of pubic and axillary hair, and the onset of the menstrual cycle. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the onset of sexual changes and growth patterns varies with individuals and that this is natural and normal. Students are helped on an individual basis to avoid anxiety if their development is ahead of or behind their peers. The importance of postponing sexual activity is discussed as is the importance of delaying childbearing. In addition, the importance of personal hygiene in relation to these bodily changes is discussed. When problems arise, teachers and parents are encouraged to continue working together in a team approach to problem solving.
- 4.3 The student will develop an awareness of human fertilization and prenatal development.**  
Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes the uniting of the sperm and the egg and the development of the fetus inside the uterus.
- 4.4 The student will identify basic human emotions and effective ways of dealing with them.**  
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is placed on understanding and dealing with strong emotions, both positive and negative. Students learn how to deal with joy and exuberance, as well as those emotions resulting from loss, rejection, divorce, death, illness, and moving. The student learns to manage appropriate responses to these feelings and to avoid self-destructive or abusive behavior by using positive mental health practices.
- 4.5 The student will develop awareness and acceptance of his or her strengths and weaknesses.**  
Descriptive Statement: This includes accepting personal responsibility for successes and failures, taking pride in successes, and understanding that mistakes can result in positive learning toward success next time.
- 4.6 The student will become aware of the need to assume responsibility within the family and to function effectively as a family member.**  
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on sharing tasks within the family and helping, supporting, and communicating with family members. Special attention is given to appropriate assistance and support for and communication with family members who have physical or mental disabilities.

- 4.7 The student will describe the factors surrounding child abuse and child neglect.**  
Descriptive Statement: The terms child abuse and child neglect (including sexual abuse and electronic harassment) are explained, as well as how to protect oneself and the importance of confiding in a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, minister, grandparent, or guardian.
- 4.8 The student will identify factors contributing to the use of drugs.**  
Descriptive Statement: Discussion includes examining the motivation for using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, a need to feel "grown up," a need for peer acceptance, a "high" from the temporary effects of drugs, and/or a relief from emotional pain. Emphasis is placed on ways of dealing with one's needs and feelings without the use of drugs or other substances.
- 4.9 The student will recognize the dangers of substance use and abuse.**  
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on the misuse of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Content includes the adverse effects of substance use and abuse on the individual and on the many contributing factors to family violence, sexual violence, and child abuse.