

TO: Local Education Agency Superintendents

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: March 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Response to Recent Federal Actions – Comprehensive Health Education

Overview

Recent actions by the federal government have raised questions related to Pre-K-12 schools' policies regarding LGBTQIA+ students. Over the past six weeks, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has provided guidance to support schools in creating safe and inclusive learning environments for all Maryland students, including our LGBTQIA+ students. To continue supporting these student groups and the unique challenges they may face, this week's memo focuses on Comprehensive Health Education in Maryland's Public Schools.

What is the Comprehensive Health Education Framework and its relationship with a local education agency's (LEA) curriculum?

The Comprehensive Health Education Framework ([State Framework](#)) identifies what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level or grade band. The framework is neither curricula nor instructional material. It provides guidance to support LEAs in procuring and/or developing age-appropriate, scientifically based, medically accurate curricula that best suit the diverse needs of the students in their county. For more information on the State Framework, please visit our [website](#).

In light of the President's most recent executive orders, should LEAs revise or alter the delivery of their health education curriculum, which includes lessons on gender identity and expression?

No. Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) [13A.04.18.01](#) requires teachers to continue to provide Family Life and Human Sexuality (FLHS) instruction that represents all students regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. LEAs are legally obligated to continue providing an inclusive health education curriculum, including lessons on gender identity and expression, that fosters a learning environment where students are taught the importance of respect, dignity, and understanding toward others.

How are LGBTQIA+ students reflected in the health education curriculum?

LEAs have a legal obligation to provide an inclusive curriculum that fosters a learning environment where all students are taught the importance of respect, dignity, and understanding toward others. Health education, when taught with fidelity, plays a crucial role in this mission by addressing diverse identities, including those of LGBTQIA+ students. This approach helps ensure that every student can thrive in a safe and supportive community.

What role can community members take in health education?

COMAR 13A.04.18.01 requires each LEA to have a joint committee on FLHS comprised of educators and community representatives. This committee is tasked with reviewing public health data about the youth in their community and comment on FLHS instructional materials. If approval of FLHS instructional materials is necessary, the joint committee will follow local guidelines and policies to do so.

The recently established Comprehensive Health Education Standards and Framework Validation Committee (SFVC), comprised of parents, teachers, LEA leaders, and associated content experts from across the state, is reviewing the State Framework and will present its findings to the Maryland State Board of Education in June 2025. Shortly thereafter, the public will be able to review and comment on potential revisions. For more information on the Comprehensive Health Education SFVC, please visit our [website](#).

If a parent/guardian has concerns about gender identity and expression appearing in the health education curriculum, what are their options?

COMAR 13A.04.18.01 requires FLHS instruction to represent all students regardless of ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. However, COMAR 13A.04.18.01 also requires LEAs to provide an opportunity for parents/guardians to view the FLHS instructional materials and allow parents/guardians to opt their student(s) out of FLHS instruction, penalty-free.

Additional Information

If there are additional questions or topics that you would like MSDE to consider covering in future memos, please do not hesitate to contact Laurel Cratsley, Blueprint Implementation & Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov. If you have additional questions and/or concerns related to Comprehensive Health Education programs, please contact Jason Semanoff, Director, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, at jason.semanoff@maryland.gov.