



Guidance & FAQs

Health Education Legislation in Oklahoma

Introduction

Recent legislation called Maria's Law ([70 O.S. § 11-103.9b](#)) states that beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, all Oklahoma public schools will be required to provide mental health instruction, as part of any health education curriculum, with an emphasis on the interrelation of physical and mental well-being.

This statute also affirms that school districts may enter into agreements with nonprofit entities and other community partners to assist with or to provide mental health education. The nonprofits and community partners must be approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Here is the [list of approved nonprofits and community partners](#).

Other recent legislation called the Health Education Act ([70 O.S. § 11-103.13](#)) requires school districts to provide instruction addressing all health education subject matter standards **by the 2023-24 school year**.

This statute explains health education instruction may be integrated into one or more existing subjects or provided as an addition to existing coursework. It also states that teachers assigned to teach health education as a stand-alone course must be certified in physical and health education.

Additionally, subject matter graduation requirements emphasize that all students will receive health instruction needed to lead healthy and physically active lifestyles ([70 O.S. § 11-103.6](#)).

To clarify the legislative requirements for health education instruction, the OSDE has compiled the following frequently asked questions and resources.

- [General \(PreK-12\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Elementary and Middle School \(PreK-8\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [High School \(9-12\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [List of Approved Nonprofits and Community Partners](#)
- [Contact OSDE](#)



General (PreK-12) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Are students now required to have mental health instruction, as part of any health education curriculum?

In the 2022-2023 school year, only students who are already receiving health education instruction are required to have mental health instruction included. The instruction should be aligned to the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) which includes an emphasis on the interrelation of physical and mental well-being in accordance with Maria's Law. Starting with school year 2023-2024, school districts must provide the opportunity to receive health education instruction addressing all health education subject matter standards, in response to the Health Education Act ([70 O.S. § 11-103.13](#)).

Q. Are school districts required to partner with nonprofits and community organizations to assist with or to provide mental health education?

No. School districts are not required to partner with nonprofits and community organizations, but they **may** partner if the school district believes this type of partnership could assist with providing mental health instruction to students. All partner organizations must be approved by OSDE and the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS). Here is the [list of approved nonprofits and community partners](#). If a district wishes to partner with a nonprofit or community organization that is not on the list, the district can request an approval from [OSDE's Student Support](#) and ODMHSAS.

Q: Are teachers required to have a certification in Physical Education, Health and Safety to provide instruction in health education?

For a stand-alone health class, teachers must be certified in PreK-12 Physical Education, Health, and Safety. Educators have the option to add PreK-12 Physical Education, Health, and Safety as a credential area to their existing certification. OSDE is authorized to issue a provisional certificate, valid for not more than two (2) years, to individuals assigned to teach a stand-alone health education course in order to afford the individual the opportunity to obtain certification in physical and health education. If health standards are integrated into another existing subject, the teacher does not have to be certified in PreK-12 Physical Education, Health, and Safety.



Elementary and Middle School (PreK-8th) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How can elementary or middle schools meet the requirement of offering instruction aligned to Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health and Physical Education (OAS-HE and OAS-PE) starting in the 2023-2024 school year?

Two options are available for elementary or middle schools to meet the health education requirements of state law.

Option A: Offer stand-alone health courses.

For schools that offer stand-alone health courses, instructors must possess a certification in PreK-12 Physical Education, Health, and Safety.

Courses must address **all** of the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) within the given grade-band (e.g., PreK-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, 6-8th grade) being taught. For example, when teaching PreK-2nd grade students, instruction must address all grade-band standards within the four years.

Option B: Offer health education instruction integrated into other courses.

For schools integrating health education in existing courses, the courses must include instruction on all of the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) for the given grade-band (PreK-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, 6th-8th grade) being taught. School districts will demonstrate compliance with the law through the existing accreditation process.

Q. Does instruction aligned to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education need to be offered at each elementary or middle school grade-level?

No. By the 2023-2024 school year, schools will be required to provide health education instruction aligned to the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) at each grade-band. The Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education are divided into four grade-bands: PreK-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, 6th-8th grade, and 9th-12th grade. Therefore, schools can determine if health education is provided at one grade-level within a grade-band or if instruction can be spread out across the grade-levels within a grade-band.



High School (9-12) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How can high schools meet the requirement of offering instruction aligned to Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health and Physical Education (OAS-HE and OAS-PE) starting in the 2023-2024 school year?

Two options are available for high schools to meet Oklahoma's requirements for health education instruction.

Option A: Offer stand-alone health courses.

For a stand-alone health course, teachers must be certified in PreK-12 Physical Education, Health, and Safety.

Stand-alone health courses (whether scheduled to extend over the school year, semester, quarter, or other division of the district's school term) must address **all** of the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) within the grade-band of 9th-12th grade. For example, if a school district offers a semester-long stand-alone health course that high school students in any grade may take, the course must address all 9th-12th grade-band standards in order to fulfill the law.

Option B: Offer health education instruction integrated into other courses.

A high school can also meet the requirements of the health education law by demonstrating that it integrates **all** of the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) for the 9th-12th grade-band into other courses offered at the high school level. Health education instruction must address all grade-band standards within the four years of high school. School districts will demonstrate compliance with the law through the existing accreditation process.

Q. Does instruction aligned to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education need to be offered at each high school grade-level?

No. By school year 2023-2024, schools will be required to provide health education instruction aligned to the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) at each grade-band. The Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education are divided into four grade-bands: PreK-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade, 6th-8th grade, and 9th-12th grade. Therefore, schools can determine if health education is provided at one grade-level within a grade-band or if instruction can be spread out across the grade-levels within a grade-band.



Q. Do CareerTech courses count toward meeting the mental health instruction legislative requirements at my school?

Many schools currently have partnerships with their local Career Technology Centers. If a school district's associated Career Technology Center offers a course approved for health education credit that is available to **all** district students in grades 9th-12th and that meets the certification requirements addressed above for stand-alone and/or integrated courses, then it will fulfill the health education requirements.

Q. Do students have to take a health education course in order to graduate high school?

No. Students are not required to take a health education course in order to graduate. However, **all** schools must offer instruction in **all** of the 9th-12th grade-band standards for health education at some time during high school. Instruction of 9th-12th grade-band health standards can be provided through a stand-alone class or integration in existing courses which can be spread out across the four years of high school.

Q. Does completion of the health education standards have to be indicated on the student's transcript?

No. The completion of the health education standards does not have to be indicated on a student's transcript.

Linked Resources for Additional Guidance:

Oklahoma State Law

- [Title 70 \(Schools\) Legislation](#)

Oklahoma Academic Standards

- Mental health objectives were added to Standard 1 in the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education](#) in 2022.
- Mental health objectives were added to Standard 5 in the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Physical Education](#) in 2022.

Additional Resources for Schools

- [OSDE's List of Approved Nonprofits and Community Organizations to Support Mental Health Instruction](#)
- OSDE's [Student Mental Health Protocol](#)
- [OSDE Connect](#): Online Health Education Learning Modules Leading to a Micro-credential: Available in Summer 2023
- [Red Banner Book 2021](#)



- Two-Day Professional Development on Health Education: Seven Regions of the State in Summer 2023 and 2024.
- Health Education Framework: Available in Summer 2023
- Open Educational Resources (Free) for Health Education: Available in Summer 2024

Contact Us

Send additional questions to:

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