

U Choose to Know



What's law got to do with it?

Although you don't need to be a legal expert to teach sex education, it helps to be up to date on federal and state laws that relate to topics that often come up, like sexting, statutory rape, access to services, etc.

Here are some actual questions from students and sample answers that will help you navigate the most common law-related topics that come up during sex education:

“How old do you have to be to be legal to have sex?”

In Maryland, you have to be at least 16 to legally consent to sex, but there are exceptions when people are close in age—for example, a 15 year old can legally consent to sex with a 16 year old.

“If a girl gets pregnant, does she have to go to a different school?”

No. [Title IX](#) (Title Nine) is a federal law that protects pregnant students from being pushed out of their school. The school has to provide an equal education to all students.

“Can you get birth control without your parent/guardian's permission?”

They can, but it's possible that a parent/guardian might find out, unless they go to a [Title X](#) (Title Ten) clinic where sexual and reproductive health services are confidential. They can buy some methods, like condoms or emergency contraception, at any store without a parent/guardian's permission.

“Is it illegal to have naked pictures on your phone?”

If the pictures were sent or received, then yes, this is called sexting. It's considered child pornography and taking naked pictures of people under 18 (even yourself) is a federal crime.

“If you are 16, can you buy the morning after pill?”

In Maryland, anyone of any age can buy emergency contraception over the counter from a store.

“Do you need a parent/guardian's permission to get an abortion?”

No, but in Maryland, a parent or guardian usually has to be notified, unless a doctor can legally make an exception. Exceptions are if they decide you can give informed consent yourself, you don't live with your parent or guardian, you would be hurt if they were notified, or they tried but couldn't get in touch with the parent/guardian.

Want to know more about sex ed and the law? Check out the [UChoose Teacher's Guide to Sex Ed](#)



Another great resource is [Sex Etc. Sex in the States](#)



For more information, visit: UChooseBaltimore.org