



FL DOE Comprehensive Health Education Mandates Frequently Asked Questions

What if a student asks a question and I don't know the appropriate response?

As a teacher, it's completely understandable to feel uncomfortable in this situation. It is OK to say, "I don't know, that's a good question! Let me look into that and get back to you." The purpose of these lessons is to raise awareness. You are not acting as an expert, but as a teacher who is just beginning the discussion, not providing all the answers.



Listen to the student, show respect, and express empathy. How do staff in Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) actively listen? By using the 4 A's:

1. **A**sk open ended questions and gather details,
2. **A**ffirm they're doing the right thing by telling you,
3. **A**ssess for any threats of harm to themselves or others, and then
4. **A**ct.

When acting and looking for answers or help:

- Reach out to your school's experts. This could be the designated Prevention Liaison, the Equity Liaison, the School Counselor, an administrator, or the School Social Worker.
- Contact the School Climate & Discipline Department (SC&D), by calling 754-321-1655 or by going to BrowardPrevention.org.
- Visit the resources listed in the mandated lesson's supplemental curriculum crosswalk, or go to these SC&D webpages:
 - [Character education](#),
 - [Dating violence](#),
 - [Human trafficking](#), the Human Trafficking Awareness for Educators online course #658546 in Canvas,
 - [Internet safety](#),
 - [Mental health](#), the [BCPS Mental Health Portal](#), or
 - [Substance misuse prevention](#).

What if a student says that he/she should not be in this class because his/her parent does not want him/her to be exposed to this?

These health education lessons are part of the educational requirements schools are mandated to teach per the state of Florida. According to the FL DOE mandates, students are not allowed to "waive", "opt-out", or be excused from this instruction. Parents cannot request a statutory waiver to exclude their child's participation in this instruction.

The intent of all the lessons is to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of potential concerns as well as teach how to access help for themselves or others – whether the lesson is about mental health, child trafficking, dating violence, or substance misuse.

What if a parent emails/calls me after the lesson and expresses anger that there was no signature for permission or opt out form provided?

The best approach is to always listen, then share that this a state mandate and therefore the lessons:

1. Are developmentally appropriate for each grade level's maturity.

2. Do not require parent consent or allow parents to request a statutory waiver to exclude their child's participation in this instruction.
3. Do not allow students to "waive", "opt-out", or be excused from this instruction.
4. Do require schools to provide this curriculum.

If parents have any other questions or concerns, they are welcome to go to the Florida Department of Education website at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/healthy-schools>.

What if I am uncomfortable with the subject matter, but feel uncomfortable admitting this to my administrator?

Note: Teachers who may have a potential trauma or trigger associated with these topics, please speak to your administrator immediately.

It's normal and natural for us to feel uncomfortable teaching anything new when we are not the "experts". It can also be daunting teaching students anything that hints of mental health, human trafficking, substance abuse, or violence. Please know the content of this curriculum was selected by a committee consisting of teachers, principals, mental health professionals, and Broward Teachers' Union members. Only AGE and DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE materials were selected.

The material was designed to provide a general overview of the specific topic areas. For example, the Internet safety/ human trafficking lessons for elementary age students do not use the words "human trafficking"; sex trafficking is not mentioned at those levels. Why? Because these lessons are preventative in nature, they provide social and emotional learning and protective skills. The lessons cover how to set boundaries, how to say no, and even how to stay safe while online.

Before worrying too much or contacting your administrator, make sure you review the lessons to see if your concerns are founded. Then, if you still feel uncomfortable with a topic, address your concerns with your team leader or administrator. Specifically reference which element of the lesson you find problematic.

Finally, please consider taking one of the specialized courses for adults on the topic that worries you:

- The Human Trafficking Awareness for Educators online course #658546 in Canvas. It only takes approximately 60 minutes and has information every person will benefit from knowing.
- The [Mental Health First Aid](#) course.
- The [Dating Matters Understanding Teen Dating Violence Prevention](#) a 60-minute, interactive online training designed to help educators, youth-serving organizations, and parents understand the risk factors and warning signs associated with teen dating violence.



What if a student says he/she knows a student who is being trafficked, victimized by dating violence, using drugs, or experiencing a mental health crisis?

First, make sure to follow BCPS 4 A's listed above. As an education professional, you may be the first – and only – person to whom a student confides. Make sure the student knows telling an adult was the right thing to do. Also explain you are a mandated reporter; therefore, you cannot keep threats to safety a secret. Per Policy 5.8, school personnel shall report to the principal/designee the suspected unlawful use, possession, transmittal, sale or attempted sale by a student of any drugs, over-the-counter or prescription substances, except those authorized under Policy 6305 (Administration of Medication/Treatments), and including, alcoholic beverage or inhalant, and shall be exempt from the civil liability when making such reports.

Then, whether it is the child or their friend in danger, it is imperative that a referral be made immediately to the school counselor and/or your administrator as appropriate, while you continue to follow all existing threat assessments, child abuse policies, and procedures. As mandated reporters, all BCPS staff are legally obligated to report known or suspected abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE) and must identify themselves when reporting. During these steps, the student should not be left alone or given a pass to leave your side.

What if I suspect someone in the community (not the school) is being trafficked?

If there is an imminent threat of harm, call 911 immediately. If you suspect an adult community member is being trafficked, the chances the situation is urgent is high. Trafficking victims suffer major injuries and often need extensive medical and psychological care. Contact local law enforcement immediately if you believe anyone is in imminent danger.

You can make a report of child or adult trafficking with the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Call 1-888-373-7888, text "BeFree" (233733), or live chat at HumanTraffickingHotline.org. This is a 24 hour, 7 days a week, toll free, confidential hotline with representatives who speak over 200 languages.

Is there anything else I can do to help?

- Post and reference the BCPS ["See Something. Hear Something. Say Something."](#) reporting flyer. Students must know how to anonymously submit a safety concern that is not urgent. Teach them to help identify and intervene with at-risk individuals BEFORE they hurt themselves or others by reporting non-urgent threats, harassing behaviors, illegal activity (vandalism, theft, the sale of drugs), as well as information about planned crimes.
- Although already provided to schools, you can also print and post the [Child Trafficking Free Zone](#) or [Human Trafficking Can Happen to Anyone](#) posters.
- Review the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) BCPS provides for each topic area – [dating violence](#), [human trafficking](#), and [substance abuse prevention](#).
- As a professional, knowing the signs of drug use and abuse, human trafficking, mental health crises, and dating violence is the first step to prevention. You have the power to save lives. Follow these resources to learn more:
 - [SC&D's Resource SharePoint](#) (BCPS staff only),
 - [BrowardPrevention.org](#) (BCPS staff, community members and charter schools),
 - [School Counseling & BRACE Advisement, Social and Emotional Learning & Mindfulness](#), or
 - Call SC&D (754-321-1655) or the School Counseling & BRACE Advisement Department (754-321-1675).

Want more information about the State of Florida Health Education Mandates?

More information on the FL DOE health education related requirements and the Mental and Emotional Health Education Memo related to the State Board of Education state statute Rule 6A-1.094123 (Rulemaking Authority 1001.02(2)(n), 1003.42(2) F.S., can be found on the [FL DOE website](#). You can also visit the [SC&D mandates webpage](#) or [BCPS School Counseling & BRACE Advisement webpage](#).

