



# NEW JERSEY CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

## Understanding Your Rights as a Parent Concerning New Jersey's Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Curriculum for Public School Students

The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE) require all public school students to learn about a broad range of topics, including human relationships, mental health, social well-being, physical fitness, and sexual reproduction.

For many families, these topics are better addressed at home, at a time of the family's choosing, based on the development and readiness of the student. Fortunately, the CHPE curriculum contains an opt-out provision for students whose families do not want their child taking part in some or all of these lessons.

The New Jersey Catholic Conference has developed this guide to help Catholic families of public school students better understand their opt-out rights - - and how to effectively exercise them.

New Jersey statute currently states that:

- Any child whose parent or guardian presents to the school a signed statement that any part of instruction in health, family life education, or sex education is in conflict with his or her conscience or sincerely held moral or religious beliefs shall be excused from that portion of the course where such instruction is being given and no penalties as to credit or graduation shall result therefrom. Students excused from instruction must be provided with alternative instructional content and activities aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for CHPE and the local health education curriculum.

All parents/guardians should be notified of the excusal process by the school district. However, no specific procedures are specified, so the notification could be accomplished by letter, email, handbook reference, or website post.

If you are not notified or are unable to find instructions about the excusal process using your district's resources, it is essential that you reach out to your school to inquire because a lack of response from a parent intending to opt-out would provide the district with the assumption that you actually approve of the child attending the classes. *(You have opted-in unless you proactively opt-out.)*

For more information from the Department of Education, click [HERE](#).





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## Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Must the school provide a copy of the health education curriculum upon request to help me decide if I want my child enrolled in this curriculum?

**Answer:** *Yes, the school must make available a copy of the curriculum for review upon request. Be sure to ask your child's school's principal or vice-principal, or the district's curriculum director, about textbooks, instructors notes, and other instructional materials.*

**Question:** If our school brings in a guest speaker for an assembly to discuss a topic related to family life education, is the school required to notify me in advance?

**Answer:** *No. However, you may ask the school in advance for plans to bring in guest speakers and the content of their presentations to help you decide if you want your child to participate.*

**Question:** What if I have not received opt-out information from my child's school district?

**Answer:** *If you have not received adequate information from your school district regarding opting your child out of the CHPE curriculum, please visit your school district's website, which should provide the information you are seeking. If it does not, we recommend you contact the district's curriculum director or you parish's director of religious education for assistance.*

**Question:** If I have contacted my child's school requesting that s/he be excused from some or all of the CHPE curriculum to no avail, what should I do next?

**Answer:** *You have several options: You may contact your district's curriculum director, superintendent, or local school board (all of whom can be found on the school/district website). Be sure to document your steps along the way, including all inquiries made by you and the responses you received. If you need more help, you may contact the State of New Jersey at:*

Office of Controversies and Disputes  
State of New Jersey, Department of Education  
P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625  
609 - 376 - 9079  
[controversiesdisputesfilings@doe.nj.gov](mailto:controversiesdisputesfilings@doe.nj.gov)

For more information, you may also contact:

Dr. George Corwell  
Director, Office of Education  
New Jersey Catholic Conference  
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