Laws Relevant to a Sexual Health Unit

Legal Requirements of Sexual Health Education
State laws regarding sexual health education vary. Some states require sexual health education while others do not. In some states, HIV and STD prevention education is required, but nothing more. Other states require that all sexual health education delivered must be comprehensive and medically accurate. State may also have specific requirements, such as that sexual health education must be taught at certain grades, or that certain topics are required or prohibited. Look up sexual health education laws for your state here: www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_SE.pdf

Providing Health Care for Minors
Individual states have laws about what, if any, health care minors can consent to on their own. Different ages may apply to different services, such as accessing contraceptive care, STD services, prenatal care, adoption, abortion, medical care for a child, and mental health care. When discussing with a student any kind of health care for which the student can legally consent, it is very important to remember to protect that student’s privacy. Disclosing a students’ health information even to other teachers or school employees is a violation of privacy and possibly illegal. See what the minor consent laws are in your state: www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_OMCL.pdf

Sexual Exploitation & Assault Laws

Sexual assault and abuse laws
Sexual assault and abuse laws define sex crimes, including those committed against minors. Look up your state laws here: www.rainn.org/public-policy/laws-in-your-state

Statutory rape and age of consent
Each state has laws criminalizing sex between individuals with certain age differences. The younger people in these situations may or may not have given verbal consent for the sexual activity that took place. They are incapable of legally giving consent because of their age. These age differences vary from state to state. If statutory laws were not covered on the page provided above for sexual assault and abuse laws, find additional information here: http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/SR/StateLaws/index.shtml

Help, advice and information
State sexual violence coalitions can answer questions about state laws, and can provide help, support, advice or professional consultation. They can also connect you with local sexual assault centers. Find your state coalition here: www.nsvrc.org/organizations
Safe Surrender of Infants
Many states have enacted Safe Surrender laws in order to protect the health of infants who
would otherwise be abandoned. Laws may specify who can leave an infant at a Safe Haven
location, and which locations may serve as Safe Havens. Look up your state’s law here:
www.nationalsafehavenalliance.org/states/

Laws Affecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Students and Those with LGBT Parents
Laws affecting LGBT students and students with LGBT parents are changing rapidly in the
United States. Relevant laws include those related to discrimination, health care coverage,
marrige, adoption and hate crimes. See state laws that affect LGBT individuals:
www.hrc.org/state_maps

Age of Marriage
Age of marriage varies from state to state, as do the ages at which young people need parents’
permission to marry. See state laws regarding age of marriage here:
www.law.cornell.edu/wex/table_marriage