



Guidance and FAQ:
Menstrual Equity in
Connecticut Public Schools


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Introduction

In 2023, the Connecticut General Assembly passed [updated legislation](#) requiring public schools to supply a range of menstrual products in school restrooms. The intention of the law is to address period poverty, meaning the struggle to purchase period products due to lack of income. The law encompasses elementary, middle, and high schools, with the goal of promoting period equity and dignity for all menstruating students, so that they can fully participate in school life without shame or stigma.

The purpose of this guidance, issued by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) in accordance with the menstrual equity legislation, is to support schools, students, and communities in implementing the requirements of the law, with recommendations to ensure that no student experiences stigma or shame in accessing menstrual products regardless of gender, ability, language, or socioeconomic status.



Sec. 10. Section 10-212k of the general statutes is repealed and the following substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*): On and after September 1, 2024, each local and regional board of education shall provide free menstrual products, as defined in section 18-69e of the general statutes, in women's restrooms, all-gender restrooms and at least one men's restroom, which restrooms are accessible to students in grades three to twelve, inclusive, in each school under the jurisdiction of such boards and in a manner that does not stigmatize any student seeking such products, pursuant to guidelines established by the Commissioner of Public Health under section 89 of this act. To carry out the provisions of this section, the local and regional boards of education may (1) accept donations of menstrual products and grants from any source for the purpose of purchasing such products, and (2) partner with a nonprofit or community-based organization.

What is Period Poverty?

Period poverty disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color. In addition to the educational impact of period poverty, students may face social, emotional, and mental health impacts particularly when menstruation leads to stigma or bullying. Menstrual equity means addressing period poverty in a way that removes economic barriers by providing resources equitably according to student need and uplifts all students by ensuring they never have to miss school due to their period.

jumped from 20% to 23% of teens,¹ and more than a third of parents worry about their ability to afford period products.² Benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) do not cover menstrual supplies, and studies have found that nearly 1 in 5 American students have missed school due to a lack of period protection.³ Furthermore, 51% of students surveyed expressed that not having access to free products in school bathrooms makes them feel their school does not care about them.⁴

Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual products, menstrual health education, hygiene management, waste facilities or any combination of these barriers. Period poverty impacts students of all ages in Connecticut and their families. Between 2019 and 2021, period poverty in teens ages 13-19

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles in implementing Connecticut's menstrual equity law include dignity, privacy, accessibility, and inclusivity. The new requirements were enacted to ensure that all students who menstruate have access to safe and affordable menstrual products. This law is a response to evidence that lack of access to menstrual products can have a negative impact on students' ability to attend school and participate fully in school life. The intention of the program is to support schools in meeting student needs while working to end period stigma and to support students in caring for their bodies with dignity. Menstrual equity is intended to treat menstruation as we would treat any other health or hygiene issue. Menstrual products should be viewed as normal, available, and stigma-free, just as we might treat soap or toilet paper.

A. Dignity

- The driving principle for providing menstrual products is to support efforts to replace feelings of stigma, shame, and embarrassment about how bodies work with positive messaging around periods. All students deserve dignity related to period care such that their education is not disrupted, and economic barriers leading to period poverty are removed.

¹ Think & PERIOD. State of the Period 2021. https://mcusercontent.com/29f1178890c5edd62b65fd8b6/files/5273bbfb-0ddb-c6fa-1e13-f67fa2ac54e7/State_of_the_Period_2021.pdf

² Always & Plan International. It's Time to Talk: Menstrual Health and Hygiene in the U.S.: Executive Summary. <https://planusa-org-staging.s3.amazonaws.com/public/uploads/2021/06/Always-and-Plan-USA-Its-Time-To-Talk-Exec-Summary.pdf>

³ Always. The Always Confidence and Puberty Wave VI Study, Nov. 2017.

⁴ Think & PERIOD. State of the Period 2021. https://mcusercontent.com/29f1178890c5edd62b65fd8b6/files/5273bbfb-0ddb-c6fa-1e13-f67fa2ac54e7/State_of_the_Period_2021.pdf

B. Privacy

- This guidance has been drafted to direct schools to implement the program in ways that empower students to care for themselves. Directions on providing products are designed to help students feel safe, including making their own choices about which products to use and where to access them.

C. Accessibility

- School boards are directed to implement the program such that products, instructional materials, and dispensers are equitably and fully accessible to all students regardless of age, gender, ability, language, or socioeconomic status. Accessibility is integral to positive messaging and the work of destigmatizing periods. Informational flyers for students are available in a range of languages including Spanish.

D. Inclusivity

- The law was designed to affirm all genders in making empowered decisions about their health, including menstrual health. As a result, the law requires products to be provided in any all gender bathrooms, one men's restroom per school, and all women's restrooms in the building. In practice, using language such as "students" instead of "girls" and "menstrual health" instead of "menstrual hygiene" is important in working against stigmatization.

Requirements

The following guidance is intended to support schools in making decisions about how to stock and provide menstrual products in keeping with the guiding principles outlined in section 2.

Administration

It is recommended that schools assign at least one staff member who will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the menstrual equity requirements. Such staff member may be a teacher, school nurse, counselor, or other staff.

The coordinator serves as the contact person for any restocking concerns, for tracking usage, for developing engagement and dialogue with the student body and broader school community to ensure effective implementation, and for responding to student concerns. This coordinator will also be responsible for ensuring teachers, operations managers, janitorial staff and school administrators are knowledgeable about the goals and implementation of the law and will maintain communication with such staff to ensure continuously adequate supplies of products as required by the law.

As an additional measure to strengthen the implementation of menstrual equity in Connecticut, school boards may opt to adopt school board policies reflecting the intent and principles behind our state's menstrual equity law. Students may wish to engage in leadership on promoting education and in developing board policies. Students should be encouraged to support implementation of measures to end period poverty.

Location

In order to comply with this law, schools must ensure products are available not just at the nurse's office. Students must be able to access products discreetly and independently.

A one-page flyer should be posted in a visible location in every bathroom. Schools may use the DPH templates or create their own. This flyer should be tailored to the suitable age range (DPH offers templates at two reading levels, elementary level and middle/high school level) and should specify the obligation to provide a range of products free of charge in a safe and private location. This flyer should include the name and contact information for the coordinator for each school. Flyers may include a QR code linking to a full set of resources including this guidance available on the DPH and State Department of Education (SDE) websites, which will be available in a selection of languages.

Schools should consider how to ensure access to products at all times throughout the school day. Schools should also discuss how to ensure safe and private access to products during times that school bathrooms are made inaccessible to students, including during field trips. Schools may consider printing both this guidance document and instructional materials on how to use menstrual products to keep a paper copy in a safe and accessible location for staff and students as a resource. Schools may also consider placing the flyer in *all* restrooms and in other visible locations to reinforce awareness of the requirement to provide free products, and to work towards destigmatizing periods.

Product Storage and Dispensing

Schools may consider low-cost alternatives to dispensers, including:

- Countertop box or basket
- Freestanding storage unit such as drawers or a cabinet
- File or folder affixed to wall

In selecting the best option for the school, staff and students may want to consider factors including:

- Whether dispensers can readily carry the full selection of products
- Whether the method is tamperproof or easy to remove
- The size of the student population and whether a smaller receptacle such as a folder on the wall is sufficient (for instance, in elementary schools)
- Student maturity and receptivity

To comply with the requirements of the law, Connecticut public schools serving students in grades 3 through 12 must install coin-free dispensers or otherwise provide free access to a selection of menstrual products in:

- All women's restrooms
- Any all-gender restrooms
- One men's restroom per school

Note that dispensers are not the only option! Wall-mounted dispensers may be repurposed if it is clear to students that all products are offered free of charge, and if dispensers are placed at an accessible height in compliance with the ADA. Brands for dual-product (pads and tampons), coin free dispensers include [Aunt Flow](#), [Evogen](#), [Wildflower Flow](#), and [Uline](#). Because some dispensers are specific to certain brands of product, schools should select carefully when researching dispensers or opting for alternative ways to stock products.

In addition to selecting a suitable dispenser or other container for products, schools should develop a system for ensuring all locations are fully stocked. DPH recommends schools assign the coordinator, and/or a student volunteer or representative at the middle and high school levels, to serve as contact person named on each flyer in each bathroom so that students can report the need for restocking in a private manner.

Each bathroom where products are stocked should also be equipped with lined trash receptacles using disposable liners. Trash receptacles in each bathroom stall are recommended for privacy, secured to the stall in an easily accessible location. Disposable period products cannot be flushed.

Product Selection

According to the definition of products in the Connecticut General Statutes, schools are required to supply both tampons and menstrual pads wherever products are stocked.⁵ However, schools may also wish to collaborate with students to consider the provision of reusable products and should refer to the educational and instructional resources listed in this guidance to ensure that all students have access to education on the safe use of these products (including but not limited to menstrual cups, menstrual discs, reusable cloth pads, and period underwear).

⁵ Conn. Gen. Stat. § 18-69e.

Regardless of whether schools opt to supply products other than pads and tampons, schools should make efforts to ensure that students are supported in their use, including the ability to access bathrooms and supplies (soap and hot water) as needed to care for themselves while using, washing, and replacing any reusable products.

The following suggestions outline the range of product types schools may consider supplying. DPH does not endorse specific brands, and schools may seek generics or other equivalents. A guiding principle in product selection should be to meet the needs and preferences of the student community, and may include the following:

- Tampons: Brands include Kotex (including Kotex U marketed for younger users), OB, and Honeypot. A tampon is a disposable product designed to absorb menstrual fluids by insertion into the vagina during menstruation. Absorbency levels include light, regular, super, super plus, and ultra. Tampons may have a plastic or cardboard applicator, or no applicator at all. Tampons are safe to use at any age.
- Pads: Brands include Always and Kotex (including Kotex U marketed for younger users). A pad is a disposable menstrual product designed to absorb menstrual fluids by affixing to underwear during menstruation. Pads may be sold in the following sizes and absorbencies: panty liner, light, regular, heavy, overnight.
- Reusable pads: Brands include GladRags and Knix. Made of cloth, commonly cotton or bamboo. Reusable pads attach to regular underwear and are washable. They may be sold in a range of sizes ranging from liner to overnight.
- Menstrual cup: Brands include Nixit, Saalt, UltuCup, and DivaCup. Menstrual cups are made from silicone and are inserted into the vagina. The cup makes a seal with the vaginal walls and collects menstrual blood. When users remove the cup from the vagina, they empty the menstrual blood into the toilet, wash the cup, and can re-insert into the vagina. The cup can safely be worn for 12 hours. Many users like this option because it is cost effective and sustainable. Menstrual cups should be boiled once per month to keep them clean and safe for use. Of note, they may not be compatible for use with an IUD.
- Menstrual disc: Brands include Flex, Saalt, and Cora. Menstrual discs are similar to a menstrual cup because they collect menstrual blood, rather than absorbing it. They are made of medical-grade polymers. However, they are disposable, one-time use products and sit in a different location to collect the blood. The disc is placed into the vagina and pushed up to the vaginal fornix (area located at the end of the vaginal canal, surrounding the cervix). The vaginal muscles and pubic bone help hold the disc in place (compared to the menstrual cup which sits in the vaginal canal). The discs can be safely worn for 12 hours, creating less waste than tampons and making them attractive to some users.
- Period underwear: Brands include Thinx and Knix. These are designed for long wear and are washable and reusable for up to two years of use. Period-proof underwear are made of multiple layers of moisture-wicking cloth and must be washed, rinsed and air dried. Some students with sensory concerns may find these to be the most user-friendly and comfortable option.

- **Pads on a roll:** This new product option is a roll of menstrual pads designed to fit on a roll on standard toilet paper dispensers. Brands include Egal.

Product Quantity

Baseline

- Disposable pads and tampons must be changed every 4-6 hours
- Heavier flow requires more frequent changes of disposable products
- Cycles follow an average of 28 days but can range from 21-40, with young menstruators often experiencing more irregular cycles
- Average periods last 5 days, but can range from 2-7 days

Based on pilot programs conducted in California schools, the following estimates may help schools assess the quantity of products to consider stocking in their school bathrooms.⁶ Note that approximately 50% of students grades 6 and up menstruate. While menstruation in grades 3 through 6 is less common, early onset of menstruation is increasing.

Estimated product use per student per month:

Number of Students	Range of Daily Products	Range of Monthly Products
1	4-6	96-504
100	400-600	960-5,040
1000	4,000-6,000	96,000-504,000
5000	20,000-30,000	480,000-2,520,000

Suggested purchase quantity per school and per district per month:

School Size	Number of Products per School per Month	District Size	Number of Products per District per Month
500 or fewer	4,5000	5,000	45,000
1,000	9,000	15,000	135,000
2,500	22,500	30,000	270,000
4,000	36,000	60,000	540,000

*Note: The above suggested purchase quantities are based on the assumption that students would utilize an average of **3 provided products per month over the course of 180 days** in the school year.*

The amount and range of products offered is up to school discretion; however, the law requires the provision of both pads and tampons, and DPH recommends at a minimum offering pads and tampons in multiple absorbency and size options. DPH recommends engaging with students for input on the appropriate selection and quantity of products offered. Some students may prefer support for the use of reusable and alternative products as cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and long-wearing options for period care.

⁶ The Menstrual Equity for All Act: A Handbook for California Public School Districts, January 2023.

DPH recommends tracking usage to best ascertain necessary quantities. Per statute, schools are permitted to accept donations of monies or in kind to support compliance with the menstrual equity requirements under Connecticut state law. Schools may choose to collaborate with community partners in securing and defraying the costs of supplying products, and a list of such resources is included in the period poverty resources section for educators in this document. Any products accepted must be unopened.

Student and Community Engagement

Including students in decision-making about the program design for offering free products plays an important role in destigmatizing menstruation. In many schools in Connecticut, students are already aware of the challenges presented by period poverty and are actively engaged in helping to meet community need and create supportive environments. On the other hand, students may feel shame and stigma, and fear speaking about menstruation. Schools may consider an anonymous line of communication or suggestion boxes if students are hesitant to ask questions or ask for support with products.

The following are suggested strategies for engaging with members of the school community. Each school may develop engagement based on existing strengths and relationships in their school.

Ideas for engaging with students

- Elementary and Middle School
 - Before or during implementation, provide short educational segments about products and dispensers in the classroom setting.
 - Engage older students with making posters, setting up “Menstruation Stations” and getting feedback on product choices.
 - Integrate awareness-raising about period poverty and free products into existing health education curricula.
- High School
 - Students may be interested in providing feedback if school boards opt to develop menstrual equity policies.
 - Support peer education campaigns by and for students on the topics of period poverty and menstrual equity.
 - Work with students to track product usage in the early months of implementation, including potentially having students lead surveys of the student body on product needs and preferences, and incorporating survey feedback into ongoing programming.

Ideas for engaging with school staff and families

All staff should be aware of the goals and requirements of the menstrual equity law before implementation. Schools are responsible for setting the tone of discussion about menstruation, menstrual equity, and period poverty in a positive, inclusive manner. This includes ensuring that students are supported in taking products as needed, as well as promoting a gender-affirming stance on which students might need products. Staff should be encouraged to permit students to access the bathroom as needed, and they should be prepared to help address any bullying or negative attention from other students related to menstruation. Schools are encouraged to remind students of security measures in place to minimize inappropriate use of menstrual products or vandalism of dispensing devices.

The resource section below includes additional resources for educating staff, teachers, and administrators about menstrual equity which may be helpful as schools design their own strategies to support implementation.

In addition to working with the communities directly present in school on a daily basis, schools may find it helpful to engage with parents and families before and during implementation. The school coordinator can communicate with parents about the range of free products offered and where students can access them, describing the requirements and intent of the law as well as being available as a contact person for questions from families.

Educational and Instructional Resources

Resources for Students

Schools have the option to develop and provide their own instructional materials on the safe use of menstrual products, and health educators may wish to incorporate instruction and awareness raising of period poverty and the menstrual equity implementation in an age-appropriate manner in their curricula. Alternatively, they may refer to the materials listed in this section. In light of the guiding principles of this guidance document, the purpose of these resources to ensure that all students, regardless of age, language, gender, socioeconomic status and technological access are able to access medically accurate and period positive materials so that they can privately and safely use the provided menstrual products. DPH recommends schools consider the following when selecting educational materials offered to students:

- *Languages spoken by the student community*
 - Schools should ensure that all resources are available to suit the language needs of their students.
- *Age and technological ability of students*
 - In elementary schools, written materials in simple language may be more accessible, while middle and high school students may privately and easily access information via QR codes. Schools may need to consider their own cell phone policies and opt to offer materials in more than one mode (such as printed and via QR code simultaneously).
- *Gender inclusivity*
 - Instructional materials should be made available in every bathroom where menstrual products are required to be provided. This ensures that students are able to access these resources regardless of gender identity, in the bathroom where they feel safest.
- *Building trusted community resources*
 - In addition to listing a point person with their contact information on the one-page flyer in every bathroom, schools should take stock of community resources in place. Schools should build on the existing trust students have for school nurses, counselors, teachers, and their own peers.
- *Integration into health education*
 - Health education classes offer an opportunity to inform students about the obligation for schools to provide free menstrual products, as well as to support the sharing of instructional resources on their use and to destigmatize menstruation. Schools may wish to assess existing health education materials and curricula offered to their students. DPH recommends assessing any existing materials for concordance with the guiding principles of dignity, privacy, accessibility, and inclusivity, including ensuring that gender-affirming language is included in all

materials. Education about menstruation for all genders is key to reducing stigma, normalizing a healthy and positive understanding of menstruation, learning how to care for a menstruating body, and developing support from peers of all genders.

The following sample resources are offered in order of grade level:

Elementary

- Amaze.org offers an age-appropriate video instructing on the use of menstrual products, targeted for ages 10-14.
 - <https://amaze.org/video/all-about-getting-your-period/>
- Girls Helping Girls Period offers an all-ages guide to using products:
 - <https://girlshelpinggirlsperiod.org/menstrual-product-guide/>
- Always offers a set of articles on first periods:
 - <https://www.always.com/en-us/tips-and-advice/your-first-period>

For younger elementary students, teachers and staff may want to use simple language to explain the presence of products in bathrooms.

One public school district developed talking points for kids in K-2 to understand the implementation of menstrual equity in simple terms, linked here:

[*Slides for K-2 Students*](#)

Middle and High School

- Planned Parenthood offers comprehensive information about using a full range of menstrual products.
 - <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/health-and-wellness/menstruation/how-do-i-use-tampons-pads-and-menstrual-cups>
- PERIOD. is a youth-driven period poverty education and advocacy organization with a global reach. Through local and student-run chapters, PERIOD. addresses period poverty and furthers menstrual equity.
 - <https://www.period.org/>
 - <https://girlshelpinggirlsperiod.org/ghgp-blog/>
- U by Kotex offers a full range of how-to information on using pads and tampons and developing an understanding of periods.
 - <https://www.ubykotex.com/en-us/education>

Resources for LGBTQ+ Students and their Supporters

- The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services recommends a comprehensive set of resources for youth, families, schools, and supporters.
 - <https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Programs-and-services/Finding-Services/LGBT-Services>
- The following guidelines were developed by leading organizations to inform gender-inclusive approaches to health education for young people.
 - [Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty and Health Education](#)

Resources for Educators and Staff

The following linked resources are intended to support educators, health professionals, and other school staff in learning about period poverty and menstrual health, and to enable a supportive environment for students as schools implement the requirements of Connecticut's menstrual equity law. If any student reports pain or other symptoms related to complications of menstruation, we recommend students speak to their primary care provider.

Menstrual Health Education

- Period Education Project Blog
 - This organization mobilizes medical students to engage with communities and provide medically-accurate health information. Blog topics include product usage, period pain, and key health issues in period education.
 - <https://periodeducationproject.org/menstrual-health-education/>
- Guide to Environmentally-Friendly Menstrual Products
 - <https://www.parachute-media.com/health-wellness/environmentally-friendly-menstrual-products-guide>
- Period.org Toolkit for Sustainable Menstruation
 - <https://period-action.org/education>

Period Poverty

- Dignity Grows
 - Hartford-based non-profit with national chapters, providing free hygiene kits including menstrual hygiene products.
 - <https://dignitygrows.org/>
- Girls Helping Girls Period
 - Facts on period poverty demonstrating how providing products in schools improves attendance and creates a supportive environment for student growth and learning.
 - <https://girlshelpinggirlsperiod.org/period-poverty-facts/>
- Alliance for Period Supplies
 - Non-profit working to supply any individual or entity in obtaining free menstrual products with nationwide shipping, depending on availability. This organization operates local chapters, including in Connecticut.
 - <https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/period-poverty/>
 - The Alliance for Period Supplies sponsored by U by Kotex, which released a study on period poverty showing the disparate impact on people of color.
 - https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U_by_Kotex_Period_Poverty_-_PPAW_Data_Set.pdf
- Beam – A program of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, the Connecticut Chapter of the Alliance for Period Supplies
 - <https://www.thediaperbank.org/beam/>
- Period.
 - National non-profit leading work against period poverty. Compiles research studies on menstrual equity and the impact of period poverty.
 - <https://period.org/uploads/Period-Poverty-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

EndoRISE: What is Endometriosis?

Endometriosis is a chronic, debilitating condition affecting 1 in 10 individuals assigned female at birth. In this disease, tissue similar to the uterine lining (endometrium) grows outside the uterus, forming lesions. These lesions are typically found within the pelvic cavity but can also develop on other organs throughout the body.

Like the endometrium, these lesions react to hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle, causing inflammation, scar tissue formation, and debilitating pain. The most common symptoms of endometriosis are:

- Problematic periods (extreme cramps, heavy bleeding, clots, spotting between cycles)
- Chronic pain in the abdomen, back, or pelvic area
- Unexplained gastrointestinal problems (constipation, diarrhea, cramping, seeing blood when going to the bathroom, pain when going to the bathroom)
- Painful intercourse
- Infertility

Endometriosis often goes undiagnosed in teenagers because its symptoms resemble those of typical menstrual cycles. However, the intensity of these symptoms leads to a reduction of quality of life, causing teens to miss school, work, and social activities. Additionally, the stigma that surrounds conversations about menstruation, and the lack of an easily accessible endometriosis diagnostic test, exacerbates the diagnosis process, often taking 7-10 years from the onset of symptoms.

EndoRISE is a ground breaking, state-supported initiative to address the lack of information on endometriosis, with a focus on research, innovation, support and education. The program's website, www.ctendorise.org, serves as a central hub of resources for the public, patients, providers and endometriosis researchers. .

As part of their commitment to raising awareness and enhancing education for healthcare professionals and educators, EndoRISE, in collaboration with EndoWhat? and The Jackson Laboratory in Farmington, CT, has distributed nurses' toolkits to schools throughout Connecticut. If your educators or healthcare professionals are interested in learning more about the nurses' toolkit, understanding endometriosis, or obtaining informational handouts for distribution, please reach out to EndoRISE at contact@ctendorise.org. For your convenience, a reference handout on endometriosis is enclosed.

Staff Training Suggestions

A key message in implementing this new law is that menstruation is normal and should not be the subject of teasing, bullying, or stigma. School staff play a key role in setting the tone for open, straightforward dialogue about menstruation to help normalize periods. Students and staff of all genders should participate in promoting menstrual equity. Seeing menstrual products in any space they may need on a daily basis works towards destigmatizing periods and helping students with periods stay in school.

The more normalized periods and period products become, the less likely students will behave inappropriately. As such, experts advise that while schools may initially experience misuse, overuse, or tampering with free products, schools should manage such behavior as they would any other challenges without removing access to products.

In addition to this guidance, the following resources may support staff training in the implementation of menstrual equity and could be included in preparations to launch the program at your school or provided as part of professional and curriculum development efforts.

- Period.org workshop for school leaders
 - This workshop includes a full presentation and learning materials for school staff.
 - <https://period.org/uploads/CONTENT-OUTLINE-Period-Poverty-in-U.S.-Schools.pdf>
- Period Action Day video on the movement to end period poverty
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC5sOVUaOQA>
- School guidance developed for other states implementing menstrual equity legislation
 - Oregon
 - <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Menstrual%20Dignity%20for%20Students%20Toolkit.pdf>
 - California
 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PtAutj0yw0Xr8zu7jkGRVwDfp5AvWNik/view?usp=share_link

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When are schools required to comply with the menstrual equity law?

A: Schools should plan to have free products available for the 2024-2024 school year. The legislation requires compliance starting September 1, 2024.

Q: Are all schools required to implement the menstrual equity law?

A: Yes. Any public school serving students in grades 3 through 12 is required to comply with the requirements of the menstrual equity law.

Q: What are the responsibilities of the school coordinator?

A: Designating a trusted adult coordinator is highly recommended to support compliance with the menstrual equity law. This coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all bathrooms are stocked, flyers are in place, and students are aware of both the requirement that products must be available free of charge and that the coordinator is their point person for any questions or concerns. The coordinator also serves as the resource for staff, educators, and families to support education about the menstrual equity law. The coordinator should develop implementation strategies that will be tailored and identified as most effective in each school. These efforts might include working with students to assess suitable product selection and delivery options, developing public awareness campaigns, and utilizing resources offered in these guidelines to train staff on how they can address period poverty.

Q: Must schools offer supplies in ALL bathrooms?

A: No. Schools are required to provide products in **ALL girls'** bathrooms, in **ALL all-gender** bathrooms, and in **ONE boys'** bathroom per school. However, products are only required to be provided in bathrooms serving students in grades 3 to 12, so schools with bathrooms serving only lower grades do NOT need to provide products in those bathrooms.

Q: Must schools offer a full range of both disposable and reusable menstrual products?

A: No. The products schools are required to supply by law are defined in section 18-69e of the Connecticut General Statutes, and referenced in section 84 of the menstrual equity law, as "tampons and sanitary napkins" or pads. No school is required to offer products in any bathroom other than these; however, schools may consider offering alternative products in accordance with student input and available resources.

Q: Do elementary, middle, and high schools have the same requirements?

A: Yes. Elementary, middle and high schools have the same requirements for providing free products, specifically that both pads and tampons must be offered in every girls' bathroom, every all-gender bathroom, and one boys' bathroom per school. However, schools have discretion in accordance with the principles of these implementing guidelines to provide products in a manner that best suits their student population.

Q: How many products should schools plan to budget for?

A: Schools may find it helpful to refer to the suggested quantities listed on page 8 of these guidelines to inform their initial product ordering. It is recommended that school coordinators track usage over the first three months of program implementation, and engage with students, to refine ordering quantity and product selection.

Q: How can schools ensure that no student is stigmatized when accessing free menstrual products?

A: The first strategy, as reflected in these guidelines, is to provide products in as many locations as possible, and to open dialogue with students and with the entire school community to work against period stigma. In all communications, schools should include careful use of language when menstruation is discussed, as well as engaging with students interested in helping with implementation. For instance, many schools have already developed "menstruation stations" in bathrooms and classrooms led by groups of students, who are aware of the needs of their community and eager to address period poverty. Frequent, repeated discussion on the issue will help reduce stigma around menstruation.

Q: Can schools use existing dispensers?

A: Yes, if existing dispensers are clearly coin-free. If easy for students to use as modified, coin-operated dispensers may be modified to disable the coin mechanism and may be labeled as free. Schools may also consider low-cost options such as baskets or drawer storage as suits their specific student community.

Q: How can schools prevent product and dispenser misuse?

A: Depending on the anticipated response from students, schools may wish to consider purchasing more tamper-proof dispenser options. Engaging students before, during, and after implementation, and giving students time to adjust to the new program will help alleviate the stigma that may trigger bullying and misconduct related to menstrual products. Schools should not restrict access to products or number of products available and should anticipate that over time the normalization of period products will lead to a more respectful response from students. Evidence in countries where free menstrual product programs have already been implemented, such as the United Kingdom and Scotland, has shown that pairing education campaigns for the entire school community during the introduction of free products results in little to no abuse of products.

Schools can also manage storage and supply by offering small restocks in the bathrooms on a frequent basis rather than making large quantities of product available at once.

Q: What can I do if a school is not complying with the menstrual equity law?

A: As a first step, reach out to the school coordinator. If no coordinator has been appointed, contact the principal. Additional resources for support in encouraging schools to meet the requirements of the law may include the school board, the Regional Educational Services Center for your district, the State Department of Education, and the Department of Public Health.

Q: Who do I contact for help or questions on this guidance?

A: Please reach out directly to the menstrual equity team at DPH at EndPeriodPoverty@ct.gov.

Acknowledgements

The Connecticut Department of Public Health would like to thank the many collaborators and supporters who led the development and implementation of the menstrual equity legislation, and who provided essential insight in advancing this guidance resource:

- The State Department of Education, Education Department and Comprehensive School Health Education team;
- Regional Educational Services Centers (RESCs) and the RESC Alliance;
- Office of Rep. Kate Farrar, 20th District;
- Beam – A program of The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, the Connecticut Chapter of the Alliance for Period Supplies;
- Dignity Grows; and
- Yale School of Public Health graduate student fellows Olivia Canie and Sarah Megiel.