

DISABILITY INCLUSION & SRHE

“Students with disabilities are **often excluded from sex ed classes**, or any materials they receive may not be accessible for different learning styles, abilities, or needs—creating another barrier to access.” (Aurelien et al., 2025)

Inclusivity & Accessibility Expectations

States requiring disability inclusion in SRHE

- Oregon
- California
- Washington

- 5/50 states require accessibility in health curriculums
- 6/50 provide *optional* resources for adapting curriculum

Colorado Youth Wellness Act

If a school district...

then the instruction must...

- Chooses to teach sex education → Be medically accurate and evidence-based
- Uses state grant money → Explicitly include the needs of students with disabilities.
- Includes students with disabilities → Use "culturally sensitive" materials tailored to their needs.
- Has a parent request an opt-out → Excuse the student without penalty

Inclusivity & Accessibility Reality

Parents and healthcare providers rely on schools to provide children with SRHE.

Intellectual disability & SRHE

As cognitive and adaptive impairments worsen, the likelihood of receiving sex education decreases dramatically

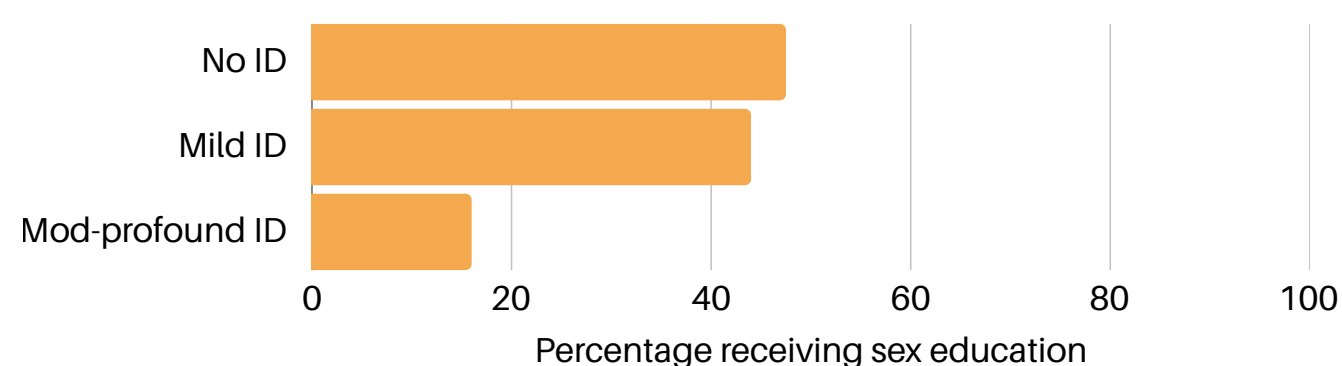


Figure 1. Distribution for Degree of ID and Sex Education Received. Source: (Barnard-Brak et al., 2014)

SRHE Providers

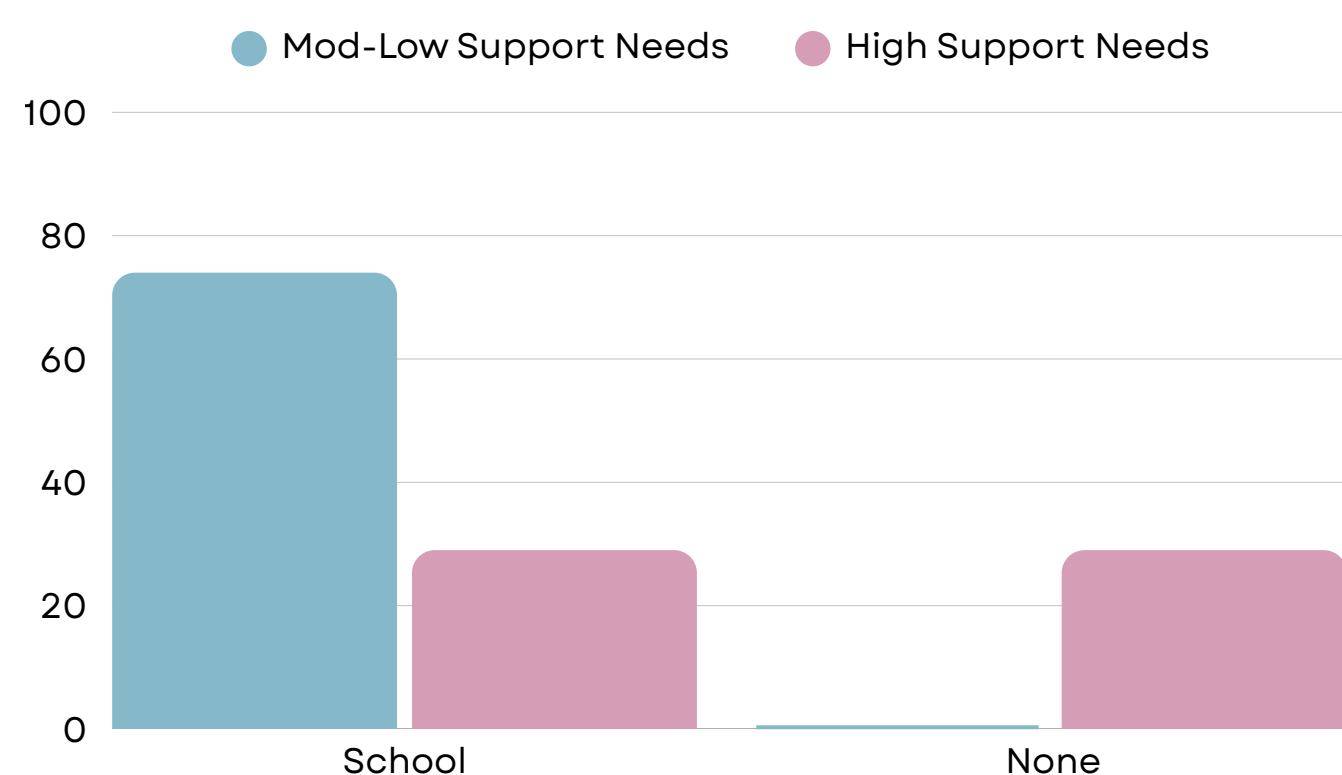


Figure 2. Comparison of percentage of ND individuals with high and low support needs receiving SRHE. Source: Informal survey

SPED students receiving SRHE

Even SPED students who can self-report have lower reproductive health education rates than non-SPED students.

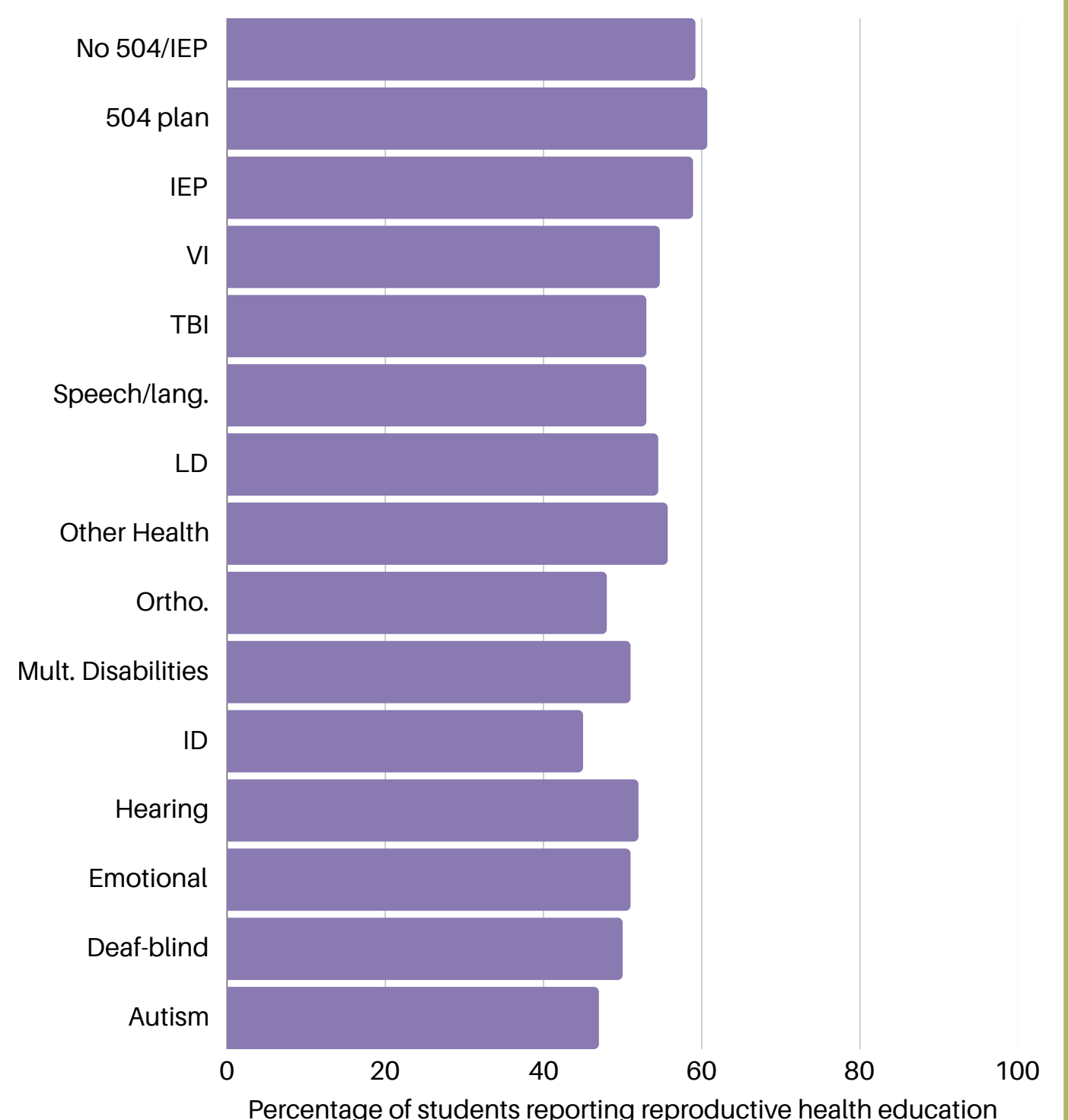


Figure 3. Receipt of reproductive health education among U.S. students able to self-report via interview. Source: (NLTS-2012)

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"When disabled students are an afterthought in the planning process, or not even considered, **education falls short and fails students** who need inclusive information the most." (Aurelien et al., 2025)

Special Educators on SRHE

What does sex ed look like in your special education program?

They don't join their peers for general health class and the teacher doesn't have a curriculum to follow.

We don't touch on sex Ed much in junior high in our program.

*We just touch base with our girls on their periods once they get them.
And then as needed for the boys in terms of hands in pants, hygiene & inappropriate physical touch.*

We do talk about consent but not as pertaining specifically to sex.

Our sex ed program doesn't actually talk about sex, just puberty and anatomy.

ND adults on SRHE

What would you change about the education you received?

Have a sex ed class just for people with disabilities only.

Explaining how all bodies are different and experience these things in unique ways.

A lot of the education in school about sex used indirect language and referenced things we were supposed to pick up on, so I missed a lot.

Less about anatomy/shame based education, more about body autonomy and boundaries.

puberty classes for the neurodiverse population in general.

Additional Resources



References

