

Age of Consent

The **age of consent** is the minimum age at which a person can legally say “**yes**” to having a sexual relationship.

It's not just about wanting a sexual relationship...



the law states that youth of a certain **age** do not have the **maturity, knowledge, or understanding** to make that decision safely.

Age of consent laws exist to protect children and youth from exploitation and abuse. Breaking these laws is considered “statutory rape” or “sexual misconduct,” even if both people agree to the sexual relationship.

What is the age of consent in the United States?

- The age of consent varies by state: it can be 16, 17, or 18 years old.
- If someone has a relationship with a person below the age of consent, they may face legal charges – even if both parties agreed.
- Some states have special rules if the age difference between individuals is small (for example, 2 or 3 years).
- Click the links for more information on [age of consent](#) and [consent laws](#) by state.

Why is the age of consent important?

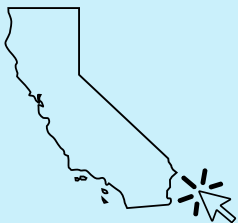
If someone has a sexual relationship with a person under the age of consent, they can face serious criminal charges, including prison time and being placed on the [sex offender registry](#). Restrictions may apply, such as not living near a school, not being alone with minors, and even restricted internet usage.



The information on this handout is based on [WebMD](#), [WorldPopulation](#), and [RAINN](#)

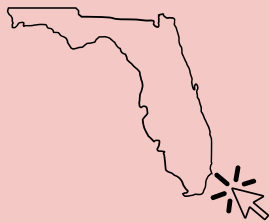
Sentences for violating age of consent laws in some states:

California



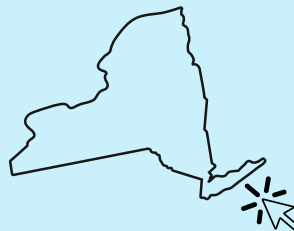
Depending on the age difference, the accused can face **time** in jail and/or a fine of up to **\$25,000**.

Florida



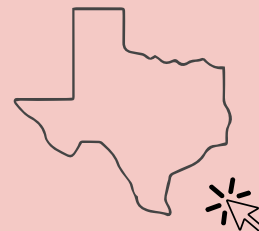
An offender can receive up to **15 years** in prison and a **\$10,000** fine.

New York



Depending on the offense, the accused can face up to **25 years** in prison.

Texas



Depending on the offense, penalties can include **2 to 99 years** in prison and a fine of up to **\$10,000**.

What happens if the older person is in a position of authority?

In some states, to prevent abuse of power, even if the child or youth is of legal age to consent, the relationship may be illegal if the older person in the relationship holds a position of authority.

This includes:

- Teachers or school staff
- Social workers
- Sports coaches
- Detention officers
- Medical personnel



What can you do?

1. [Learn about the laws in your state](#)
2. [Talk to a trusted adult](#)
3. [Remember your safety and well-being are the most important](#)

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