

Ten Ways to Ensure Good Sex Education at Your School

1. Be familiar with current sex ed laws. SB 71 went into effect on January 1, 2004. Information on SB 71 and the *Education Code* can be found at www.leginfo.ca.gov. SB 71 fact sheets can be found at http://www.aclunc.org/sex_ed_resources.

2. Be familiar with research about sexuality education. You can get information about sexuality education curricula from SIECUS (www.siecus.org), Advocates for Youth (www.advocatesforyouth.org) or ETR Associates (www.etr.org/recapp). Check http://www.aclunc.org/sex_ed_resources for research specific to what's being taught in California.

3. Ask to review the curriculum at your local school or district. If the curriculum doesn't meet SB 71 requirements, find out who chose it and ask to meet with them. Come prepared with your knowledge of SB 71 and perhaps an alternative curriculum. You can download a checklist for evaluating curricula for SB 71 compliance at http://www.aclunc.org/sex_ed_resources

4. Check local school district policy on sex education for compliance with SB 71. A policy may not exist. If there is a policy that is not in compliance, you will need to consider the best way to change policies in your school district. This may mean meeting with individual school board members, attending school board meetings and getting support from parents and community members. If there is no policy, it may mean knowing how decisions are made and who makes them and following up.

5. Look for allies. Reproductive rights organizations, youth organizations, and organizations of faith may all be interested in working with you to support comprehensive sexuality education. In addition, SB 71 has specific provisions for English Language Learners, disabled students, and gay and lesbian students. If your school's curriculum violates any of these provisions, or if you are just looking for support, try contacting organizations that work with one of these specific populations.

6. Involve other parents. Studies show that parents support comprehensive sexuality education. They care about what is going on in their children's classrooms and are effective advocates for their rights.

7. Involve students. Young people know what they need and should have a voice in their sexuality education. Get them involved and help them advocate for good sex education.

8. Talk to the media. With so much federal money going into abstinence-only education, the media can help people become aware of what's going on in their community and how their tax dollars are being spent.

9. Be familiar with abstinence-only education. You should know what the definitions are, who provides it and whether it is in your local schools. For more information about abstinence-only education visit www.siecus.org/policy/index.html.

10. Be vigilant. You might feel confident that your school would never teach inaccurate, biased information in sex education class. You know that the law forbids this type of instruction. But don't be complacent, because the fact is that inaccurate abstinence-only education is being taught in schools across California, and one of them may be yours. Many of these schools won't change their programs without active community oversight and involvement.

*This fact sheet was developed by the ACLU of Northern California
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For more information on SB 71, HIV/AIDS prevention education, and sexual health education in California schools, contact the ACLU or your local Planned Parenthood.