

MEDICAL STUDENTS FOR CHOICE'S GUIDE TO CURRICULUM REFORM IN MEDICAL SCHOOLS

Most people assume that a medical degree and completion of an OB/GYN or Family Medicine residency program means that a physician has been trained in all aspects of patient care related to women's reproductive healthcare. You might be surprised to know that many medical school programs DO NOT adequately teach contraception, options counseling, and abortion procedures in their training.

Medical students can add reproductive health information into the training agendas at their schools by:

- Surveying instruction and assessing the level and quality of abortion and reproductive health training offered at their school.
- Developing and implementing elective training opportunities and lecture series.
- Inviting speakers to give talks about reproductive health information to students.
- Training other medical students to become activists for their own medical education and for their patients.
- Organizing opportunities for students to learn abortion procedures and counseling sessions.

In many ways, medical students are the best advocates for change in medical education, but advocacy is not without risk to individuals at the beginnings of their careers. The nonprofit organization **Medical Students for Choice** (<http://msfc.org>) works closely with medical students who are engaged in curriculum reform and advocacy for medical education to mitigate individual career risk at every step of the reform process.

If you are planning to work toward better abortion education in your medical school, please contact education@msfc.org to develop effective, low-risk strategies that will balance your immediate advocacy goals with your long-term career plans.

The following steps offer a loose process for incorporating abortion education into medical school curricula:

1. Assess the Training: Meet with your fellow medical students to determine where your training stands now and what steps must be taken for improvement.

- Talk to students from all classes to find out what reproductive health information is already included in your program.
- Find out if anyone has worked on this issue in the past. Contact more advanced medical students or ask the Medical Students for Choice office if they have records of past efforts at your medical school.
- Decide on some parameters—are you trying to reform the early exposure to reproductive health information, training for clinical students, or both?
- Decide which types of subjects you want to cover.
- Examine your group's resources.
- Set realistic goals and timelines for the group's work.

2. Seek Support: Find fellow students, faculty, physicians, administrators, and members of the community who can lend support and serve as allies during the process. Connect with Medical Students for Choice to get in touch with a network of medical students who are currently engaged in curriculum reform in their own medical schools and to exchange stories, strategies, and inspiration. Join Medical Students for Choice's Curriculum Working Group to discuss your project from start to finish, to troubleshoot any problems that come up, and to maintain your momentum over the course of a year or two.

3. Research a Reform Strategy: Each medical school is structured differently. Where should you start advocating for training reform on your campus?

- Talk to faculty members to identify opportunities to incorporate more abortion education and comprehensive reproductive health education into your school.
- Identify influential people in your school and ask them to help you with this work.
- Join your medical school's curriculum committee in order to tap into an established process for evaluating and changing the curriculum.

4. Implement a Reform Strategy:

- Utilize the Curriculum Resources library on Medical Students for Choice's website (<http://msfc.org/medical-students/curriculum-reform/resources/>) to build PowerPoint presentations and obtain handouts for reproductive health information to help you implement your curriculum strategy more easily.
- Introduce or join a lunchtime lecture series to supplement existing education.

5. Keep in touch with MSFC Headquarters: Medical Students for Choice can provide you with information, surveys, and support. Curriculum reform is often a multi-year process, so Medical Students for Choice also tracks reform efforts at each medical school to ensure your work is continued by future students.