

# 10 years of good news

## The National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education

# TITLE IX

### Student Services

Title IX bars sex discrimination in virtually every aspect of the way schools and colleges educate and serve students. It protects students in the classroom and in school programs conducted outside the classroom walls.

The law covers, for example:

- counseling and testing;
- the treatment of pregnant students;
- sexual harrassment of students;
- student health services; and
- any other courses or services schools receiving federal funds offer their students.

### Counseling and Testing

Pervasive sex bias in counseling practices has come under the spotlight since Title IX passed and is on the decline. For example:

- The Strong Vocational Interest Blank test, widely used as a career counseling tool in school districts around the country, dropped its separate scoring system for girls and boys after Title IX passed. Before Title IX, girls received pink sheets which steered them to lower-paying careers such as social work and nursing. Boys used the strong blue sheets which featured careers such as scientist and physician. The Strong test now uses a single sheet for all students.
- While a recent national survey reported that one in four girls in training programs, unusual for their sex, were there despite advice against it, the same study showed that a third of the school counselors surveyed said their schools had formal programs to en-

### Coalition Organizations

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation  
American Association of Community & Junior Colleges  
American Association of School Administrators  
American Association of University Professors  
American Association of University Women  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Council on Education, Office of Women in Higher Education  
American Educational Research Association, Women's Committees  
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees  
American Home Economics Association  
American Personnel and Guidance Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women  
Coalition for Children and Youth  
Council of Chief State School Officers, Resource Center on Sex Equity  
The Displaced Homemakers Network, Inc.  
The Federal Education Project, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Federation of Organizations for Professional Women  
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.  
Girls Clubs of America, Inc.  
Lulac National Education Service Centers  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
National Association for Girls and Women in Sport  
National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors  
National Association of Commissions for Women  
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges  
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators  
National Coalition of Independent College and University Students  
National Commission on Working Women  
National Council of Administrative Women in Education  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Negro Women  
National Education Association  
National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.  
National Organization for Women  
National Student Educational Fund  
National Women's Law Center  
National Women's Political Caucus  
National Women's Studies Association  
Project on Equal Education Rights  
Project on the Status and Education of Women  
Sociologists for Women in Society  
Southern Coalition for Educational Equity  
United States Student Association  
Women's College Coalition  
Women's Equity Action League  
Women's Legal Defense Fund  
Women's Work Force of Wider Opportunities for Women, Inc.

courage students to the nontraditional courses. Another third reported informal efforts to encourage students to explore those fields.

### Pregnant Students

Before Title IX, it was standard policy in many school districts to expel pregnant students as soon as the school learned they were pregnant. Few of these young women ever returned, and a very high proportion, lacking a high school diploma and adequate job skills, wound up on welfare.

Today it is illegal for school districts to expel pregnant students or bar them from any school activity. Pregnant students and school-aged parents have the right to attend school and participate fully in any school activities as long as they are able. Pregnancy must be treated as any other temporary disability.

With one million teen pregnancies a year and rising, Title IX's assurance that pregnant students can stay in school is vital. Some schools are going beyond the law to actively encourage pregnant students to stay in school. In Atlanta, for example, one all-black public high school offers pregnant students prenatal care, social casework, and referrals to other agencies for needs the school can't meet.

### Sexual Harrassment

The sexual harrassment of students is a hidden problem whose dimensions are just now coming to light. Studies conducted over the last few years have found that the problem is serious on college campuses around the country; one reported that 10 to 20 percent of female students nationally have been sexually harassed by professors or other school employees. In another, 20 percent of the responding students said they had received sexual attentions from their professors.

Title IX is just beginning to have an impact on sexual harrassment. Last year, the Department of Education ruled that sexual harrassment is illegal under Title IX, and educators are now on notice that ignoring the problem invites lawsuits and complaints. Scores of colleges and universities have recently issued policy statements barring sexual harrassment and setting up grievance procedures for dealing with it.

Generally, institutions find that when top administrators take a stand against sexual harrassment, it's less likely to occur. At the University of Washington, where an ombudsman estimated she was receiving one sexual harrassment complaint a week, complaints dropped to one a month after the university president spoke out sharply against sexual harrassment. His



statement was reinforced by a "get-tough" policy warning that sexual coercion would be punished with various sanctions, including firing.

#### Student Health Services

While Title IX does not require that schools or colleges offer health services, it does require that any services offered be fair and nondiscriminatory.

Until Title IX began to take effect, many colleges and universities short-changed their women students by treating gynecological services differently from other health services. Many offered no gynecological services at all. Others offered insurance policies that singled out pregnancy-related problems for special restrictions in coverage: one midwestern university, for example, covered pregnancy and childbirth only up to \$500, though the average childbirth costs three times that amount.

While many of these practices still exist, Title IX has prompted many colleges and universities to take a new look at their health services and change policies that restricted services for female medical conditions.