

# Nationwide sex education guidelines offered for schools

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**A** new plan to teach students from kindergarten through grade 12 about sex, including masturbation, abortion, contraception and AIDS, was proposed Wednesday by a group of health, education and sex experts.

Children don't learn enough about sex in school, the experts said, noting rising rates of sexual disease and pregnancy among teen-agers.

"America in the 90s can be characterized as sexually diseased," said Debra Haffner, director of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States and a member of a task force that drafted the report.

Haffner said the council — a non-profit private research organization — assembled the task force because many of its



members believe there is an urgent need to promote increased sex education.

Nine out of 10 American parents support comprehensive sex education but only one in 10 students receives it, Haffner said in a press briefing on the guidelines Wednesday.

The guidelines are intended to help local school districts set up their own sex education programs adjusted for local problems, Haffner said.

Only 22 states now require sex education, while an additional 24 recommend it, according to the report.

Copies of the guidelines will be distributed to all state boards of education, educational interest groups and school boards.

The plan has been endorsed by the National Education Association, the nation's largest education group, but is likely to draw fire from conservatives who oppose addressing areas such as abortion and contraception in the classroom.

Phyllis Schlafly, president of the conservative education group Eagle Forum,

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said Wednesday she had not seen the guidelines but objects to much of the current sex education curriculum.

"What's taught should be constructive, legal, healthy and true, and the one type of teaching about sex that comports with all of those criteria is straight-out abstinence," Schlafly said.

The task force recommended abstinence be included in sex education programs, but Schlafly said it's often presented as "really not any fun."

It is unclear how the Bush administration will react to the report. The Health and Human Services Department has drawn criticism recently for canceling a

national sex survey, but no one has yet reviewed the sex education guidelines.

Haffner said the panel tried to present a balanced guide to issues every child will encounter.

"What we've tried to do with these controversial issues is provide information so children can begin to develop their own values," she said.

Under the guidelines, children would be taught about each of six areas — including sexual behavior, relationships and sexual health — beginning at age 5. Early classes would be general and simpler, with instruction growing more complex as students age.

Haffner said the goal of the task force was to implement comprehensive sex education programs throughout the country by the year 2000.

Copies of the guidelines may be obtained for \$5 each by writing to the Sex Information and Education Council 130 W. 42nd St., Suite 2500, New York, N.Y. 10036, or by calling 212-819-9770.

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