

# PARENTS

*in control*

A GUIDE TO YOUR RIGHTS IN EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE



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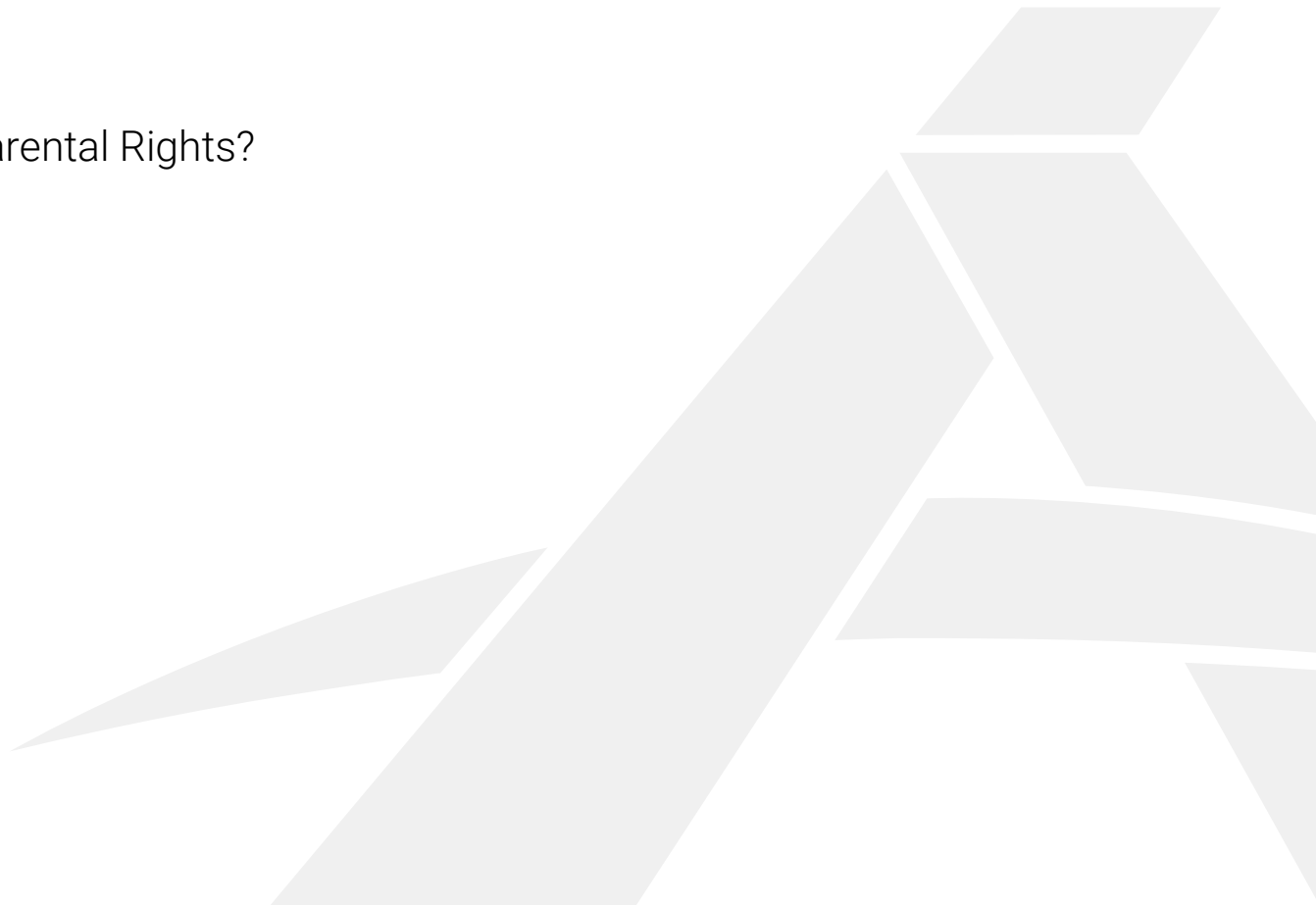
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# HOW THIS GUIDE CAN EMPOWER YOU TO *protect your rights*

Today, many families face the experience of having a child struggle with anxiety and depression. When this happens, parents should have every opportunity to seek the care and support they believe their child needs.

However, as a Wisconsin couple discovered, government and school policies are increasingly threatening the fundamental rights of parents.

When their 12-year-old daughter was struggling, school officials should have come alongside her parents, knowing that they knew and loved their daughter more than anyone. Instead, after encouraging her to say she wanted to be a boy, school policy dictated that staff would refer to her using male pronouns and a masculine name – without her parents' consent and against their express instructions not to change their daughter's name or use inaccurate pronouns at school.

These parents were forced to remove their daughter from the school to protect her, but with the help of attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, they filed a lawsuit to protect their rights and ensure this wouldn't happen to any other parents. Their daughter is now a happy, healthy high school student and is no longer struggling with her identity.

This story should be rare. But every day, parents are becoming more aware that efforts by federal, state, and local governments and school districts across the country are aimed at influencing their children to embrace ideologies that may or may not be shared by their parents. These ideologies are not merely esoteric theories – they have real-world implications that every parent should be aware of.

ADF created this guide to equip you to understand and navigate topics like gender ideology – and how it is impacting children inside and outside the classroom.

You now have the tools necessary to work to safeguard the rights of parents and defend children.



## YOU'LL BE EMPOWERED TO:

1. Explain what parental rights are and how parents can defend their rights.
2. Identify how gender ideology threatens parental rights in education and healthcare.
3. Use essential tools that can help parents protect their children.

To protect America's children, parents must exercise their rights, and we must ensure that our laws and policies respect them. This guide points to three broad principles parents should keep in mind when advocating for the protection of their rights by the government: **Accountability, Choice, and Transparency (ACT)**:



### **A** ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Ensure that all parents can hold the government accountable for any infringements on their fundamental rights.

### **C** CHOICE

Ensure that all parents can choose the education and healthcare they deem best for their children.

### **T** TRANSPARENCY

Ensure that all parents have reliable information about their children's health and education so they can make the best decisions for their children.



# WHAT ARE ‘PARENTAL RIGHTS’?

**SIMPLY PUT, PARENTAL RIGHTS ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF PARENTS TO CARE FOR AND DIRECT THE UPBRINGING OF THEIR CHILDREN.**

## **BUT WHERE DO THESE RIGHTS COME FROM?**

Recognizing the source of parental rights completely shapes one’s understanding of them, including how far they extend and the harm caused by their violation.

**PARENTAL RIGHTS, LIKE ALL NATURAL RIGHTS (SUCH AS FREE SPEECH AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM), ARE INDEPENDENT OF AND PREDATE GOVERNMENT OR POLITICS. THEY ARE GIVEN BY GOD, AND GOVERNMENTS EXIST TO PROTECT — NOT GRANT OR WITHHOLD — THESE RIGHTS.**

We know this because families themselves predate government — they are the first, foremost, and foundational building blocks of any society or government.

That’s an important distinction!

Governments have a duty to protect the rights of parents, and every government official, school board member, and teacher has a responsibility to respect these rights.

Children do not “belong to all of us” in the way that some politicians are fond of saying. Parents have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their children.

This is why — for over a century — the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that parental rights are fundamental and protected by the U.S. Constitution.

To illustrate this point, former Texas Senator Phil Gramm once told a woman, “My educational policies are based on the fact that I care more about my children than you do.”

She said, “No, you don’t.”

Gramm replied, “OK. What are their names?”

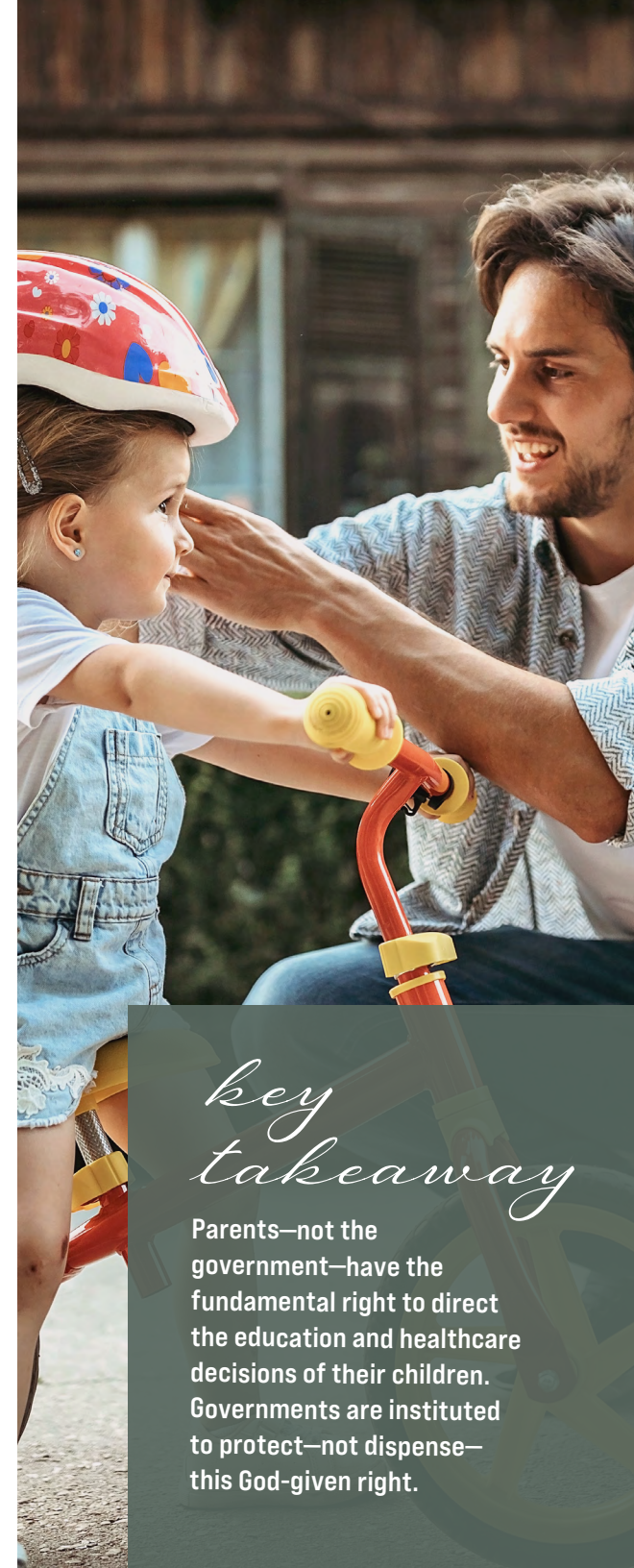
Parental rights come with parental responsibilities. Every parent has not only the right but the duty to care for their children. Again, this is not because of a government law or edict, but because of a fundamental, God-given order that exists apart from government.

Parents must promote their children’s well-being and ensure their children receive the education — including the moral and religious education — they need to be prepared for adulthood.

## ACT

Parents should be ready to hold accountable any public official or challenge any school policy that threatens their constitutional rights. This starts with being proactively informed about relevant policies your child’s school or state foster/adoption administration has in place.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



## *key takeaway*

Parents—not the government—have the fundamental right to direct the education and healthcare decisions of their children. Governments are instituted to protect—not dispense—this God-given right.

# THREATS TO PARENTAL RIGHTS

How are parental rights being threatened?

We need look no further than our local school board to see the battle raging for our children's hearts and minds. In some schools, children who can't even tie their own shoelaces are being taught that there are more than two genders and that they or their peers may have been born in the "wrong body." Students are being asked to complete invasive questionnaires about their sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation. In some places, kids are being taught that they (and their parents) are either oppressors or oppressed solely based on unchangeable characteristics.

In recent years, many parents have discovered that instead of focusing on math and reading scores, too many public schools have embraced gender ideology, weaving this ideological agenda into every aspect of the school day while parents watch math and literacy scores plummet. As a result, parents began asking questions.

That's why so many parents, lawmakers, and lawyers are pressing to protect the rights of parents. We are witnessing a groundswell of support on this issue, impacting elections, as seen in Virginia in the 2021 governor's race. Lawsuits are being filed across the country to officials from secretly socially transitioning children at school or committing other acts that drive a wedge between kids and their parents. While the state has an interest in promoting children's education and protecting their health and safety, it must seek to achieve those goals in a manner that respects parental rights. The state should always seek to support parents, not supplant them.

Parents should act to hold the government accountable when the state intrudes upon their rights – through school boards, lawsuits, and even legislation at the state and federal levels.

## SECRET 'TRANSITION' PLANS

Dan and Jennifer Mead had no reason to distrust their daughter's school. Their young daughter was meeting regularly with the school counselor, and the Meads were receiving what they assumed were truthful and complete reports and updates from the counselor.

The trust they had placed in the school was shattered, however, when an inadvertent disclosure by a school employee allowed the Meads to discover



that the school had been secretly “transitioning” their daughter for months. The school district was using a masculine name and male pronouns for her during school hours. Then school employees would communicate with Dan and Jennifer using her correct name and female pronouns. One staff member even altered school records to hide their actions – trying to ensure that any reference to a masculine name and male pronouns was removed from documents that went home to the Meads.

The school saw loving parents like Dan and Jennifer as obstacles to maneuver around, not as those who have the primary responsibility for their child’s upbringing.

Sadly, these “secret transition” plans (often called something like “Gender Support Plans”) have been adopted by countless school districts across the country. Parents like Dan and Jennifer are finding out that their children’s teachers, administrators, and counselors, along with other school officials, are part of a concerted effort to encourage children struggling with their bodies to embrace gender ideology and are doing so without consulting their parents.

What message is sent when school policies direct school officials to deceive parents about their children?

It’s a message that says parents aren’t capable of walking through a difficult season of life with their child. That only government-approved policies and school officials can help. And far too often, that “help” means denying reality and putting children on a difficult-to-escape path that can lead to harmful cross-sex hormonal interventions that permanently damage healthy body parts and organs.

Children experiencing confusion or discomfort with their sex deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. They need effective and compassionate care. They need their parents.

**SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND POLICYMAKERS MUST REMEMBER THAT PARENTS DON’T ABANDON OR RELINQUISH THEIR RIGHTS AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE DOOR. PARENTS LOVE THEIR CHILDREN – MORE THAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS EVER COULD – AND SCHOOL POLICIES MUST RESPECT AND REFLECT THIS TRUTH.**

As Maria Keffler of Advocates Protecting Children points out, the infusion of gender ideology into schools is insidious because “kids trust trusted adults.” Schools are, in effect, telling confused children to trust them – not their parents if they’re not on board with the practice of treating children as the opposite sex.

“Gender Support Plans” often direct school employees to deceive parents by keeping information about the social transition hidden from parents. Therefore, parents may be unaware that the school is encouraging – and usually *requiring* – that teachers and classmates address their child by pronouns or names that correspond with the opposite sex.

In many cases, parents are challenging policies that purposefully keep them in the dark. Dr. Stephen B. Levine, a distinguished life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, has provided evidence to courts stating that the social transitioning of children is an experimental therapy that exposes vulnerable children to dangerous lifelong physical, social, and mental health risks. According to Dr. Levine: “For a child to live radically different identities at home and at school, and to conceal what he or she perceives to be his or her true identity from parents, is psychologically unhealthy in itself, and could readily lead to additional psychological problems.”



In the Wisconsin case previously mentioned, a school district did just that — openly defying the wishes of parents to have their 12-year-old daughter be addressed only by her given name and with female pronouns. The parents had no choice but to withdraw their daughter from the school. Their daughter soon reconciled with her biological sex. She eventually told her parents, “Affirmative care [the school telling her she was a boy] really messed me up.”

School officials do not have the medical expertise, much less the authority, to make these kinds of decisions for students. **WHEN THEY TREAT STUDENTS AS THE OPPOSITE SEX WITHOUT PARENTAL CONSENT OR NOTIFICATION, THEY VIOLATE THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF PARENTS TO DIRECT THE UPBRINGING, EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE OF THEIR CHILDREN.**

Policies that institutionalize deceit and see parents as potential obstacles are now going beyond local school boards. In 2024, California lawmakers and Governor Gavin Newsom passed the misleadingly named *Support Academic Futures & Educators for Today's Youth (SAFETY) Act*, which forbids school districts from passing policies to ensure employees will notify parents if their child identifies as transgender or requests to be called by a different name or pronouns. Parents do not surrender their God-given right to know what is happening to their children at the schoolhouse door, and that includes being immediately informed of critical information regarding their child's mental and emotional well-being.

## ACT

Parents should actively insist that schools be honest and transparent about their policies regarding students' healthcare. No policy should ever encourage or require a teacher or school employee to lie to a student in service of an ideology. Parents have a right to expect their child's school not to deceive them systematically about what goes on in the classroom.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



## key takeaway

Parents should support policies that hold school officials legally accountable for efforts to “socially transition” a student who is confused about his or her gender, including treating a student as the opposite sex by using incorrect pronouns or names.



## GENDER IDEOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Parents should also take an active role in reviewing the materials and curricula their children are exposed to in the classroom regarding gender ideology.

We believe that all individuals are made in the image of God and therefore have inherent human dignity and should be treated with respect – including those who struggle with questions about their sex or gender.

However, gender ideology (an outgrowth of critical theory) promotes politicized views about sexual orientation and gender identity. Falsely asserting that sex is merely “assigned at birth,” gender ideology denies the objective, scientific truth that we are each either male or female (often referred to as the gender “binary”) from the moment of our conception and that our sex is as inherent in us as is our membership in the human race. And our identity as male or female is immutable, meaning it cannot change. Gender ideology asserts that a young person’s purely subjective and often changeable feelings about gender are what is “true” about them, and the concrete facts of biology must be ignored.

When gender ideology is taught in schools, students may feel pressured to conform to viewpoints that violate their own conscience or undermine their family’s values. Coercing or punishing speech in this way can violate students’ freedom of speech, freedom of religion or conscience, and the rights of their parents to direct their child’s education and upbringing.

In some places, children as young as age 4 are shown cartoons or introduced to imaginary figures like the Gender Unicorn or Genderbread Person. They are taught falsehoods, including notions that people have a gender identity not linked to their sex, that gender is fluid, and that a person’s sex can change (through the use of hormones and surgeries to alter the body’s physical appearance). Such use of hormones and surgeries – often euphemistically dubbed “gender-affirming care” – is presented as a pathway to emotional peace. But the reality is quite different.



In 2024, England's National Health Service (NHS) reflected the growing body of science that indicates "gender-affirming care" is neither safe nor effective, specifically for minor children. The NHS announced they would stop prescribing puberty blockers for children — a good first step.

In the United States, states like Alabama and more than 20 others have taken action in passing laws to protect children from harmful, irreversible, and experimental procedures, which often lead to permanent damage, including sterilization. Along with several activist organizations, the Biden-Harris administration sued to block this law, and ADF is standing with Alabama to defend children from the harmful impact of gender ideology.

In the classroom, gender ideology can also show up in learning materials that include false historical claims, including speculation on the sexual orientation of historical figures. Activist organizations like the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network integrate gender ideology into the framework of critical theory and its narrative of "power and privilege." Students are taught that if they are comfortable with the sex God gave them, they are part of an "oppressor group." This creates a hostile environment for students who do not conform to politicized views on gender ideology and undermines their right to an education.

## ACT

Parents should seek to review curricula in advance of their presentation at school and advocate for opt-in policies for materials or activities that promote the false and harmful idea that children can choose or change their sex or gender.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

## *key takeaway*

Parents must be aware that gender ideology-based materials in the classroom can expose their children to harmful concepts and notions with which they strongly disagree. Gender ideology teaches that sex and gender are not immutable but based on subjective feelings that require the "affirmation" of others, regardless of the truth.



## FREE SPEECH AT RISK

Allowing the government – through schools – to dictate and enforce its views on gender and sexuality has real consequences for free speech. When teachers are told that school policy requires them to refer to girls as boys and boys as girls, that’s effectively a requirement to lie.

When schools punish teachers and coaches for being truthful with their students, that can violate their First Amendment freedoms.

Fortunately, a growing number of courageous teachers and school counselors have refused to deny the truth that sex is binary. They are doing this out of concern for their students’ well-being. Some have successfully sued their schools. Many cases are currently pending. Compelling teachers to use inaccurate pronouns creates additional pressure for students to accept politicized views on gender.

Parents should speak out and support these individuals who are willing to put their careers and more on the line in efforts to be truthful with children.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD K-12 GUIDE](#)

## ACT

School districts cannot use teachers as a mouthpiece to promote a political agenda that violates their beliefs. Parents should help hold school districts accountable when they use coercion to push their political agendas.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



## *key takeaway*

While many school policies seem to pit school employees against parents, it is critical to remember that many teachers, administrators, coaches, and others are facing severe punishments for being truthful with children about topics like gender.

## FORCING PROSPECTIVE PARENTS OUT OF THE ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Some state government officials and policies are rejecting religious families who are seeking opportunities to foster or adopt children in need of safe, loving homes. Why? Because these families won't violate their beliefs in order to promote the state's gender ideology to a child in their home. In Washington, Oregon, and Vermont, policies dictate that families must agree to treat a hypothetical child placed in their care as the opposite sex if the child ever requests it. These policies are made without any specific child in mind and require parents to surrender their basic rights even before becoming eligible to adopt or foster.

In practice, this means Christian and other religious families holding to a biblical and scientific view of sex must pledge in advance to use biologically false pronouns, facilitate children's access to harmful hormone treatments, and take children to events like pride parades.

While states struggle to find homes for tens of thousands of children living in group homes or even in unlicensed facilities like hotel rooms, they are telling loving families they can't open up their home to a child as long as they hold to their religious faith.

In short, states are instituting an ideological litmus test that forces parents to choose between their fundamental rights and providing a home for a child in need.

That's wrong — and it hurts kids.

This is why ADF is challenging these unlawful policies on behalf of families seeking to live out their calling to care for children who desperately need — and deserve — a loving home of their own.

## ACT

Parents should take a stand and insist that government policy never forces them to choose between their Christian faith and an opportunity to foster or adopt a child. Check out ADF's free guide **Confronting Religious Discrimination: A Guide for Foster & Adoptive Parents** for more information.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD FREE GUIDE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



## key takeaway

Loving parents should never be subjected to a government-imposed, ideological litmus test in order to open their home to a child in need.

## PROTECTING FAIRNESS, SAFETY, AND PRIVACY SPACES

In addition to what is happening in classrooms, gender ideology-based school policies allow males to compete in girls' or women's sports or to intrude into female private spaces.

This inevitably results in harm on and off the playing field.

On the field, girls and young women who have trained for years in a sport can suddenly find themselves playing against male athletes who have overwhelming biological advantages. When schools and athletic leagues/conferences choose to ignore reality and allow middle-of-the-pack males to compete against females, young women lose honors and opportunities to compete at elite levels. Athletes from Connecticut to West Virginia to Tennessee have filed lawsuits to protect girls' right to a fair playing field under Title IX.

Additionally, female athletes forced to compete against males have suffered serious injuries as a direct result of the biological advantages enjoyed by male opponents. In some cases, the injury's impact can be severe and long-lasting. In one situation, a team was even forced to forfeit a game after a female player was injured by a male competitor. This is all preventable by following common sense — and the law — and protecting female sports.

### **SIMPLY PUT, BELIEFS DON'T CHANGE BIOLOGY. AND ALLOWING MALES TO COMPETE AGAINST FEMALES IS ANYTHING BUT FAIR OR SAFE.**

Off the field, the safety and dignity of female athletes come under threat when government officials prioritize gender ideology. Allowing male athletes into private female spaces — like

restrooms, locker rooms, and even hotel rooms for team travel or school trips — harms women and girls. In some cases, female athletes have been forced to crowd into smaller restrooms to avoid changing in front of male teammates in the locker room. In at least one instance, a young female athlete was subjected to taunts and vile sexual comments by a male athlete on her team, who was unfairly robbing her of opportunities to compete.

Forcing women and young girls to compete against males has nothing to do with equality. It has everything to do with ideology, and it's creating real victims. Parents must act by standing for fairness in girls' sports. When school boards or athletic leagues and associations choose to embrace gender ideology, parents should be aware that their daughters are at risk of harm — on and off the field.

Threats to women's sports are also coming from the Biden-Harris administration, which has acted unlawfully to undermine Title IX's protection for women's opportunities. ADF has filed multiple lawsuits, and several courts have responded by blocking the implementation of the administration's new rule.

## ACT

Parents must hold schools, athletic associations, and government bodies accountable for choosing ideology over the dignity of women and girls. That includes standing with the courageous female athletes who have spoken out and are challenging unlawful policies.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



## *key takeaway*

When truth is abandoned and ideology prevails, there are consequences. Allowing male athletes to compete against female athletes is unfair and unsafe.

# WHAT IS ADF DOING TO *protect parental rights?*

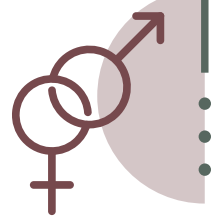
In response to the growing threats, ADF created its Center for Parental Rights, which litigates precedent-setting cases to protect parental rights. ADF's Center for Public Policy is also actively working with state lawmakers and Congress on legislation that protects parental rights.

## OUR EFFORTS INCLUDE:



Defending the rights of parents to make informed decisions on behalf of their children and to oppose efforts by government officials to hide information from parents.

Partnering with organizations including The Heritage Foundation to launch the *Promise to America's Parents* to address divisive government policies that promote racial division and gender ideology.



Ensuring that people of faith are allowed into the foster and adoption system so they can provide loving homes to children without being forced to compromise their beliefs.



Strategically engaging in litigation to guarantee parents' fundamental right to direct the upbringing, education, and healthcare of their children.



Standing with teachers and parents who are challenging public school policies that violate their rights and push false ideologies on students about human sexuality, race, and other controversial topics.

Crafting legislation and providing legal testimony and resources to state and federal legislatures working to protect parental rights.



# HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

Equipping yourself with the knowledge of the threats that exist to parental rights is only half the battle. Parents must be willing to take advantage of opportunities to increase accountability, choice, and transparency regarding school or other government policies that threaten their rights.

Here are just a few tools you can utilize to make a difference.

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Parents can know what is being taught at school and what books, videos, and websites students are exposed to. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or its state equivalents, sometimes called open-records requests, are good tools. Below we spell out how to leverage them.

Many children spend a minimum of 30 hours each week in a classroom setting. It is generally a parent's right and obligation to know what is taught and which materials (written, audio-visual, online, and spoken) are utilized during the school day and if these materials contain elements of harmful ideologies. State laws may contain exceptions and requirements that could impact these requests.

When parents make an information request, they are entitled to expect a thorough response from the district or local school administrator.

But too often, this is not the case.

Open-records requests give parents the right to request many kinds of recorded information held by public authorities. They also can be an important way to find out what is going on behind closed classroom doors because they can expose supplemental materials, outside resources, teachers' manuals, and information regarding ongoing training teachers receive.

It is imperative that open records requests be very specific. The guidelines on the next page will be helpful in formulating a request.



# DO



**Do ask to copy or inspect textbooks** and written or online materials that were used in a specific class or activity during a specific time frame.

**Do tailor requests.** If, for example, the request is for a list of library books, they may be available, but may not include classroom books, donated books, or new books ordered during the year.

**Do ask for emails and other correspondence between specific (don't say "all") district employees,** board members, or any other person you suspect is involved in the work of the committee devoted to topics such as "equity" or "inclusion." Along with all the names of participants, they will supply information on other groups with which they are working, actions taken, and plans for future implementation of questionable material.

**Do ask for correspondence or emails that cite a specific resource, website, or title.** Teachers often supplement curriculum with videos, books, and websites, and that information is not usually kept by the district. When the district responds, chances are they will include unexpected information, creating another avenue to pursue.

# DON'T



**Do not ask for a list of books, videos, websites, etc.** If the district doesn't have that specific list, they can legitimately claim they have no document to send.

**Do NOT ask for a list of members** if the school district has a committee devoted to a questionable topic such as "equity" or "inclusion."

When submitting a request, remember that it is just a starting point. The information provided will likely create more questions, but it will also point parents to additional and more specific document requests that will be helpful. Do not be intimidated by the process. With perseverance, parents can prevail. Many already have.





## ADVOCATING FOR OPT-IN POLICIES

Opt-in policies give parents the most choice while opt-out policies are a passive right that parents must actively assert, preferably at the beginning of each school year and separately for each enrolled child. Only eight states (Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee and Utah) require that parents affirmatively opt their children in for any sex education, and the obtaining of parental consent is to be initiated by the school.

Thirty-four states and D.C. allow parents to opt out of any sex education on behalf of their children. Forty states and D.C. specifically require school districts to notify parents that sex education will be provided. Thirty states and D.C. require public schools to teach some form of sex education (e.g., abstinence or STIs/AIDS instruction).

## ACTIVELY ENGAGING WITH SCHOOL BOARDS

Engaging school boards and legislators can be intimidating, but it is an important element of protecting children and preserving parental rights. Becoming a parental rights advocate requires courage and persistence, but protecting children is the responsibility and duty of every parent.

**FIRST**, parents should research their school district and know whether the school board members are elected by geographic zones in the district or whether they are elected “at large” – meaning everyone in the district has the chance to vote on who sits in every seat on the board. (Some school districts are mixed, with certain board members elected by specific zones and others elected at large.) And parents should know the name, email address, and telephone

number of the school board representatives either for their zone or, if elected at large, for their whole district.

**Parents should regularly engage their school board members by calling and writing about matters and topics of concern to them and their children.**

**SECOND**, parents should register in advance (easily found on most school district websites) to speak at scheduled board meetings about issues impacting their child’s education, safety, and physical and mental health. **All communication with school board members (whether in person, by phone, or in writing) should be clear, concise, civil, and courteous (the “4 C’s” of communication)** but should also be personal, relevant, and impactful. When speaking publicly, having well-prepared statements that can be read in the time allotted can ease nerves and spotlight with great impact the importance of the issues at hand.

**THIRD**, parents should connect with other concerned parents and citizens for the benefit of shared information, strength in numbers, and encouragement for the task at hand. Being a parent who is willing to show up and speak at school board meetings is a victory for all parents. The rights to government Accountability, Choice, and Transparency (ACT) must be proactively exercised and relentlessly preserved.

Parents who desire to see gender ideology decisively rejected in schools should strongly consider running for their local school board and supporting like-minded candidates who will promote protective policies for children and respect for the fundamental rights of parents.



## ADVOCATING FOR PARENTS WITH LEGISLATORS

Parents with the courage to face a school board should have no problem engaging their state legislators regarding education and healthcare issues affecting children. The first step is knowing who your legislators are and how and where to reach them. This information is easily found at [OpenStates.org](https://www.openstates.org) via a simple address search.

The second step is proactively reaching out. Legislators are elected to represent the interests of their constituents, and most value hearing from the people they represent. As with school boards, it is important to use the four C's of communication — be clear, concise, civil, and courteous in asking elected officials to take specific action on important matters related to children's education and healthcare.

### ENGAGED PARENTS SHOULD:

- Know the issues
- Build relationships with legislative staff
- Voice concerns regarding important issues in a timely manner, and
- Freely share information among friends, family, and neighbors to facilitate community engagement.

Parents can also partner with state and national grassroots organizations like ADF, The Heritage Foundation, Family Policy Alliance, ParentalRights.org, their state's Family Policy Council, or one of several other groups. These organizations link arms with parents and concerned citizens to protect pro-family values and engage legislators through online petitions, grassroots efforts, and calls to action.

Legislators must be encouraged to introduce and support legislation that ensures government accountability for violations of parental rights, offers choices for parents to obtain the best possible quality education and healthcare for their children, and creates transparency so parents know what their children are being taught and how they are being treated.

### GET LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Parents who believe their rights (or their child's rights) have been violated in education or healthcare can contact ADF for legal advice. The U.S. Constitution and both federal and state laws protect the rights of students and parents. These protections are well-established principles on which our nation was founded, but these freedoms must be constantly promoted and protected by courageous parents to preserve America and its future generations.





ALLIANCE DEFENDING  
FREEDOM



[ADFLegal.org](https://www.adflegal.org) | 800-835-5233