

Curriculum Reform

MSFC believes that abortion and family planning training should be a standard part of all medical school curricula. A comprehensive reproductive health education curriculum should thoroughly cover all of the topics below. Improving your school's curriculum to include these components may be the most important work that your MSFC chapter does, because it benefits future medical students as well. Use the following baseline curriculum and strategies to guide your reform efforts.

Baseline Curriculum

- Basic statistics on abortion
- Contraception counseling
- Epidemiology of unintended pregnancy
- Ethics of abortion and physician responsibility
- Pharmacology of contraception/emergency contraception
- Pharmacology of medication abortion
- Pregnancy options counseling
- Sexual health/dysfunction
- Spontaneous abortion diagnosis and management
- Surgical abortion techniques

Learning objectives

- Ability to provide supportive and non-judgmental pregnancy options counseling to patients, including providing gender affirming counseling to trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming patients
- Ability to provide contraception options counseling to patients in a variety of circumstances, including post-partum
- Knowledge of the pharmacology of contraception, emergency contraception, and medication abortion
- Knowledge of the epidemiology of unintended pregnancy and abortion
- Knowledge of the diagnosis and management of spontaneous abortion
- Knowledge of the etiologies and management of sexual dysfunction
- Understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding abortion and physician responsibility

In addition, every medical school should provide students the opportunity to observe abortion procedures, including pre- and post-abortion counseling. If your school does not currently provide this exposure, please refer to the Reproductive Health Externship section of this handbook for information on how to set up an individual training experience with a participating clinic.

Strategies for Curriculum Reform

The following framework provides guidelines for pursuing curriculum reform efforts at your medical school. As curriculum reform is not a one-size-fits-all process, the following strategies can be adapted into the model that will work best for your school. Curriculum reform can be a multi-year process, so documenting your work and making sure the next set of leaders has the knowledge they need is very important to continuing reform efforts.

MSFC staff can support you in brainstorming and providing resources. You can also find support within the global network of MSFC members, many of whom have engaged in curriculum reform previously. If you are looking for support, email students@msfc.org.

1) Evaluate Your Curriculum

- a. Identify the abortion and family planning gaps in your curriculum by surveying students, speaking to faculty, and drawing from chapter member experience.
- b. Contact more advanced medical students or ask MSFC headquarters if we have records of past curriculum reform efforts at your medical school.
- c. Utilize MSFC's baseline curriculum or another reproductive health curriculum models to help you identify gaps in the curriculum.
- d. Curriculum resources and sample surveys can be found on MSFC's website: <https://www.msfc.org/medical-students/curriculum-reform/resources/>

2) Identify Goals and Create a Plan

Your initial goal can be revisited and edited as the process unfolds, but will provide you with a starting framework. First determine:

- a. Which reproductive health topics would be most pertinent to add or improve in your current curriculum? Draw from student surveys to determine this.
- b. Identify how the material should be added: as a new lecture, an addition to an existing lecture, a case study, an optional lecture, or covered in a TBL session.

3) Gather Support

- a. Identify allies among the student body and other organizations on campus who will support your efforts and show up to class once new material is added.
 - i. Demonstrating robust student support is essential to convincing the administration that reform should be implemented!
- b. Identify allies among the faculty and administration, and request information on how to implement curricular changes and who you will need to petition.
- c. Divide tasks among interested students to keep them engaged in the process.
- d. MSFC can connect you with members at other medical schools who have experience in curriculum reform as well.

4) Research and Create a Realistic Proposal

- a. Utilize resources provided by MSFC and ally organizations to compile information on the reproductive health topic your chapter wants included in the curriculum.
- b. Outline the course material so that it is functional within the existing curriculum.
 - i. The goal is for the administration to see that a faculty member could teach the material you will propose with minimal additional work. A functional proposal will increase the chances of a successful reform effort!
- c. Find a faculty member who would like to teach the material. (In some instances we have seen students teach as peer learning opportunities, with a faculty member supervising.)
- d. Identify specific units and time slots where this new information can be inserted in the existing curriculum, and where students will be willing likely to participate.
- e. Collect support for the proposed change from faculty and students in a petition.
- f. Compile a report including the proposed curriculum change and content, scheduling options, and demonstration of support from students and faculty.

5) Present Your Case and/or Next Steps

- a. Present your report to key faculty and administrators, which will likely include a dean of curriculum or a curriculum committee.
- b. Identify students who will take the lead on this project next year if necessary.
- c. Maintain detailed notes of your progress thus far to pass on to the next student leaders.
- d. Maintain relationships with allied students, faculty, and administrators, and update MSFC staff on your progress.

Additional Resources

The Curriculum Reform page on MSFC's website includes resources you can use to develop curriculum materials, in addition to surveys and other tools. MSFC staff can also provide resource materials developed by other MSFC chapters who have successfully added reproductive health topics to their curricula.

<http://www.msfc.org/medical-students/curriculum-reform/resources/>