



**Building Equal Opportunity**  
Chicago Women in Trades  
1455 S. Michigan, Ste. 210  
Chicago, IL 60605  
(P) 312-942-1444  
(F) 312-942-0802  
[www.chicagowomenintradeg.org](http://www.chicagowomenintradeg.org)  
[cwitinfo@cwit2.org](mailto:cwitinfo@cwit2.org)

**The New York Times**

## **Group Says Course Training Still Breaks Along Sex Lines**

Diana Jean Schemo

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Three decades after Congress passed Title IX, the law meant to end sex discrimination in publicly financed education, vocational and technical courses remain as heavily segregated by sex as ever, according to a report released here today.

The report, by the National Women's Law Center, a nonprofit group representing women on economic, education and workplace issues, analyzed enrollment figures in high school vocational and technical courses nationwide. It found that 96 percent of the students training for jobs in cosmetology, for example, were female. Young women account for more than 85 percent of the students taking child care and health aide courses.

Training for traditionally male fields, too, showed little change, with young men accounting for 94 percent of students in plumbing and electrical work, 93 percent of the students in welding and carpentry, and 92 percent in auto mechanics courses. The patterns were the same in every state and region.

The group also filed a dozen complaints, one for every regional office of the federal Education Department's Office of Civil Rights. The complaints detailed segregation in vocational and technical courses by sex and demanded investigations into whether public schools were violating Title IX.

"The evidence is clear; far too many schools are providing inferior opportunities for their female students," Marcia D. Greenberger, co-president of the National Women's Law Center, said at a press conference today. "What we found was unconscionable."

In a statement, C. Todd Jones, deputy assistant secretary for enforcement in the Office for Civil Rights, said the office was "committed to ensuring that girls and boys have equal access to the vocational programs that interest them" and would "vigorously investigate each of the complaints filed by the National Women's Law Center and determine whether the schools are in compliance with Title IX."

Along with the enrollment data, the group released federal wage figures showing that workers in the heavily female service fields earned a fraction of what workers earned in the building trades and computer support, both fields dominated by men. The median income for health aides, for

example, is \$11.06 an hour, and for beauticians, it is \$8.49 an hour. In contrast, the median wage for electricians is \$19.29 an hour, while computer support specialists earn \$17.53 an hour.

More conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation did not instantly support the law center's conclusions. Krista Kafer, senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, said that while discrimination might crop up, "I don't think that it's a conspiracy or a pattern of discrimination, of people not enforcing Title IX, or teachers and guidance counselors dropping the ball."

"In the end," Ms. Kafer said, "it does come down to personal preference."

The complaints, however, say that more than personal taste creates the disparities.

They said that counselors often steer young women away from vocational and highly technical courses.

The group also cited recruitment drives that send messages both subtle and overt that girls are not welcome. At one vocational school recruitment fair, Ms. Greenberger said, the display for Samuel L. Gompers Vocational School in New York featured a banner that read, "Gompers Builds Mechanical Men."

Geri Harston, a Chicago electrician, said she had been turned down when she wanted to learn electrical work in high school and was steered toward nursing courses instead. Ms. Harston said she was discouraged from a construction-related job on the grounds that as a woman, she could not lift heavy objects. But as a nurse, she handled patients that weighed up to 600 pounds.

"Just the act of turning them from side to side to prevent bed sores was as physical as anything I've experienced as an electrician," she said.

It was not until seven years after graduating from high school, Ms. Harston said, that she found the course that trained her for the job she really wanted.

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