



Filing Book Objections in Florida: Steps to Protect Your Children from Harmful Materials in the Sunshine State

INTRODUCTION

- The presence of increasingly explicit and harmful content within books accessible to minors requires a proactive response from the community to shield young students from materials that corrupt, confuse, and expose them to material that is damaging at impressionable ages.¹
- Unlike adults, minors are still developing cognitively, emotionally, and morally; as such, their exposure to harmful materials can have a profound impact upon their understanding of sexuality, relationships, and the world around them.²
- Unfortunately, there are Florida school libraries that are home to books that contain materials harmful to minors, including content that may be sexually explicit, graphically violent, reference substance abuse, self-harm or suicide, feature mature language, and/or politically motivated or indoctrinating themes.³
- However, importantly, **Florida law currently only allows book challenges based on one legal standard: obscenity**. Because of this, this guide focuses specifically on filing objections under the authority of Florida's obscenity-focused statute, Section 847.012, which prohibits the distribution of materials deemed obscene to minors.^{4,5}
- This guide was created based on real experience—our team has helped countless parents file successful book challenges in school districts across the state. As such, we know how this process works and are here to equip you to navigate the process with confidence.

¹For more, see CDF's report, "[What's Really in Florida's Public School Libraries?](#)"

²For more, see CDF's resource, "[Qualities of Age-Inappropriate Materials and Why They are Harmful](#)."

³For more, see CDF's report, "[What's Really in Florida's Public School Libraries?](#)"

⁴Florida Statutes. (2024). [Section 847.012: Harmful materials; sale or distribution to minors or using minors in production prohibited; penalty.](#)

⁵**DISCLAIMER:** This resource is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The information contained herein should not be relied upon as a substitute for legal counsel.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CHALLENGING HARMFUL BOOKS IN FLORIDA SCHOOL LIBRARIES

- **Step 1: Identify Harmful Content using our “Books to Watch Out For” Resource**
 - Start by reviewing our folder of book reports on flagged book titles in our resource titled, [“Books to Monitor: Explicit Titles Found in Public School Libraries.”](#)⁶ This tool helps parents, pastors, and other citizens not only understand why certain books may be inappropriate for minors, but to also identify potentially harmful titles in their local school libraries.
 - Many of the books in this collection contain content that may raise concerns under Florida law, particularly regarding sexual material and obscenity. While this resource does not draw legal conclusions, it is designed to help citizens recognize content that may be inconsistent with standards currently set forth in state law, including:
 - [Section 847.012, Florida Statutes – Prohibited materials harmful to minors](#): This statute prohibits the knowing sale or distribution of obscene or sexually explicit materials that are harmful to minors. It includes criminal penalties and serves as a key standard for evaluating what content may be inappropriate for children in educational settings.
 - [Section 847.001\(19\), Florida Statutes – Definition of “Sexual Conduct”](#): This statute defines the term “sexual conduct” used in Florida obscenity law. It includes descriptions of sexual intercourse, masturbation, and lewd exhibition of genitals, example criteria that help identify what kind of material may be considered harmful to minors.
 - [Section 1006.28\(2\)\(b\), Florida Statutes – Oversight of School Library Materials](#): This provision requires school districts to ensure that materials available in classrooms and libraries are not pornographic, do not depict or describe sexual conduct (as defined above), and are age-appropriate and suitable for student comprehension. This establishes

⁶The reports provided in this folder were originally produced and publicly made available by the organization [BookLooks](#), which, at the time of this resource’s creation (June 2025), is no longer in operation. While these reports identify sexually explicit content, they do not constitute formal legal findings of obscenity under Florida law. However, the excerpts these reports highlight reflect material that may fall within the scope of content described in Florida Statutes [Section 847.012](#) (prohibiting obscene or sexually explicit materials harmful to minors), [Section 847.001\(19\)](#) (defining “sexual conduct”), and [Section 1006.28\(2\)\(b\)](#) (requiring school materials to be age-appropriate and non-pornographic). Additionally, BookLooks assigned numeric ratings (typically 3, 4, or 5) featured in the lower, right-hand corner of each report to indicate the severity of content based on its own methodology; however, these ratings were developed by Book Looks and are thus not a part of any rating system we have established. As a matter of review approach, some users may choose to begin with titles rated 4 or 5, given the pervasive extent of the sexual content identified in those reports, before proceeding to titles rated 3. However, the presence of concerning material across all ratings represented should warrant careful review of each title in consideration of the applicable statutory standards.

the expectation that school library content should reflect community standards and educational relevance.

- **Note:** These statutes are helpful to keep in mind when completing your book objection form (see [Step 4](#)) or filing an appeal (see [Step 6](#)). Referring to the applicable statutes in your submissions can help strengthen the basis of the objection you are making.

- **Step 2: Check Your School Library Catalog**

- Once you have familiarized yourself with the list of harmful titles, the next step is to see if the book is in your school district library. To determine this, use our resource “[How to Audit Your School District Library](#)” for additional insights on doing this.

- **Note:**

- Some school library catalogs may require login credentials to access full search results. If you encounter this, we recommend reaching out directly to your district for additional guidance.
- Some counties provide specific lists with all the book titles featured in the schools in the district (in a PDF, Excel spreadsheet, etc.).
- In some cases, search errors or incomplete catalog entries may prevent certain titles from appearing in search results. However, this does not necessarily mean the school library does not have the book. District staff can help verify availability, if needed.

- **Step 3: Review Your District’s Book Challenge Procedures in Your Local School Board Policy**

- Take time to review your school district’s policy on challenging library materials. We encourage you to visit your district’s website to locate contact information of relevant school officials and request the relevant policy from them.
- The school board policy typically outlines the required steps, definitions, and expectations for submitting a valid objection—and may include specific language or standards that should be referenced in your objection form (for more on this, see [step 4](#) below).
- Understanding your school board policy helps ensure your book challenge will be thorough, compliant, and more likely to be taken seriously.
- **Note:**
 - Keep in mind that some policies available online may not reflect the most recent updates to the book challenge process, especially as changes have been made through recent legislation. For example, [HB](#)

[1069](#) (2023) required districts to revise their policies to clearly explain how parents or county residents can object to specific materials and how those objections are reviewed and resolved, as outlined in Florida law ([Section 1006.28, F.S.](#)). More recently, [HB 1285](#) (2024) added a limit of one challenge per month per parent or county resident. If you are unsure whether you are viewing the most current version of your district's policy, contact your district directly for clarification.

- **Step 4: Complete Designated Book Objection Form**

- If a flagged title is located in your school library, you are ready to file an official objection. Objections forms are usually accessible on your school district's website. However, if a district does not have its own, the link will direct you to the [Specific Material Objection Template](#)—a general form provided by the Florida Department of Education per [Rule 6A-7.0714](#) of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and commonly used by many districts that do not have their own district-specific form.
- For an example of how to complete a book objection form, see our interactive resource "[How to Fill Out a Book Objection Form in Florida: A Step-by-Step Example](#)," which includes explanations and illustrations of a sample completed form with language recommendations.
- **Note:** Keep in mind that some districts may not use a traditional form—instead, you may be directed to a Google Form or a comparable online system.

- **Step 5: Monitor the Process and Consider a Public Records Request**

- First, we recommend checking your school's online library catalog every 2–3 days to monitor whether the book has been quietly pulled. In some cases, titles are removed from circulation without formal notification.
- Once you have submitted a book objection, check your district's website regularly to see if a book review committee meeting has been scheduled. Districts are required to post these meetings publicly, and in some cases, they may also notify you by mail.
- A book review committee is a group of school or district staff—such as administrators, teachers, media specialists, parents, students, and/or curriculum experts—tasked with evaluating challenged books. The committee reviews the content of the material, considers the objection submitted, and makes a formal recommendation to retain, restrict, or remove the book based on district policies and applicable state laws.
- If the committee votes to retain the book, and you are not satisfied with the outcome, that is the time to consider submitting a public records request to

better understand how your district handled the challenge. This step can help ensure transparency and accountability.

- For an example of how to file a public records request—including recommended language—see our resource “[How to Make a Public Records Request to Follow Up on Book Objections in Florida.](#)”

- **Step 6: If Necessary, Consider Filing an Appeal**

- If the review committee votes to retain the inappropriate material after evaluating your objection, you may have the option to appeal the decision in your district.
- You may also contact your district directly to learn the correct appeal procedure. In some cases, filing an appeal may be as simple as sending an email to the principal and copying school board members, the superintendent, and/or the library services director.
- For further guidance on how to do file an appeal—including example language and suggested steps—see our resource “[How to File a Book Challenge Appeal in Florida.](#)”

- **Step 7: Consider Attending a School Board Meeting to Raise Awareness (But Don't Skip the Process!)**

- When all else fails, attending a school board meeting can be a powerful way to raise public awareness, but it should *never* replace filing an official book objection. School officials are only obligated to act when you follow the established process.
- Therefore, if you want your concerns to be taken seriously, public comment *must be paired* with the proper documentation and procedures outlined in the steps above.
- For tips on preparing your remarks and making the most of your time at the podium, see our resource, “[When Formal Objections Fail: Speaking Up at Florida School Board Meetings About Harmful Books.](#)”

