



ALABAMA

Alabama received \$4,501,698 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2005.¹

Alabama Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Alabama Code sets minimum requirements for what must be taught in sexuality education classes. Among other things, classes must teach that:

- Abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only completely effective protection against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) when transmitted sexually; and
- Abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of lawful marriage is the expected social standard for unmarried school-age persons.

The Code also states that:

- Course materials and instruction that relate to sexual education or sexually transmitted diseases should be age-appropriate;
- Statistics used must be based on the latest medical information that indicate the degree of reliability and unreliability of various forms of contraception, while also emphasizing the increase in protection against pregnancy and protection against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS infection, which is afforded by the use of various contraceptive measures; and
- Classes must emphasize, in a factual manner and from a public health perspective, that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state.²

In Alabama, curriculum content is developed locally; however, the *Alabama Course of Study: Health Education* provides foundation for the minimum content requirements for topics such as HIV, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and pregnancy prevention. In addition, in July 1987, the Alabama State Board of Education passed the *Resolution to Provide Information to Students to Prevent the Spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome Disease in the Public Schools of Alabama*. This resolution specifies that students in grades 5–12 must receive instruction about AIDS through a health education program.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from sexuality education and/or STD/HIV education classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Alabama State Code Section 16-40A-2, the *Alabama Course of Study: Health Education*, and the *Resolution to Provide Information to Students to Prevent the Spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome Disease in the Public Schools of Alabama*.

Recent Legislation

Bill Would Ban Use of Public Funds for “Promotion” of Homosexuality

House Bill 30, introduced in December 2004, would have prohibited any state agency or public entity from using public funds or facilities to purchase electronic materials or activities that “sanction, recognize, foster, or promote a lifestyle or actions prohibited by the sodomy and sexual misconduct laws of the state.” This ban would have extended to library books and textbooks. Any public employee who violates this law would be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

This legislation was meant to extend Alabama’s current restriction on the inclusion of homosexuality (except when discussed in relation to its illegality under Alabama’s sodomy laws) in sexuality education classes. This legislation died at the end of the 2005 legislative session.

In 2003, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which declared state laws criminalizing homosexual behavior to be unconstitutional.

Events of Note

Alabamians Support Neutral, Parent-Approved Sex Education in Schools June 2005; Auburn, AL

The Center for Governmental Services at Auburn University releases “Ask Alabama,” periodic opinion polls on topics of interest to Alabamians. A recent “Ask Alabama” poll focused on sexuality education and found that parents in Alabama, like parents in states across that country, support teaching young people about sexuality.³

The survey found that more than four out of five Alabamians approve of some form of sexuality education classes being offered at the middle and high school levels. This was true among both those who identified as religious and those who identified as non-religious. However, 75% of respondents believe that parental permission should be required before students are presented with sexuality education materials.⁴

The majority (95-98%) of Alabamians support curricula that contain information on topics such as STDs, rape prevention, rape reporting, and abstinence. Additionally, the study found that 86% of respondents support discussing contraceptive methods with students. Finally, the study showed that 72% support discussions regarding homosexuality that are led from a neutral perspective, which neither supports nor condemns any viewpoint.⁵

“Parents want Alabama’s public schools to ask them first,” says poll manager Robin Salter. “It is possible many Alabamians worry that without a permission requirement, they may not even know when their children are being presented with sex education material, much less the content of that material.” Salter takes this as an indication that parents in Alabama want to protect their children from partisan influence. “Parents are comfortable having the public school system provide their children with factual information on these topics, but they reserve the right to discuss with their kids their personal views and beliefs,” Salter explained.⁶

Complete results of the “Ask Alabama” poll on “Sex Education in the Classroom” can be found at www.askalabama.org. The poll had a sample size of 603 resident Alabamians aged 19 or older and an estimated margin of error of plus or minus 4%.

*Pregnant Student Walks Graduation Stage Despite Being Banned
May 2005; Montgomery, AL*

School officials at St. Jude Educational Institute, a Catholic school in Montgomery, AL, told a senior that because she was pregnant, she had to finish her studies at home and would not be able to walk with her class on commencement day due to “safety reasons.”⁷ However, the father of the baby, a classmate of the student, was still allowed to continue at school and to walk with their class.

The pregnant student, an honor student, wanted to remain in school and obtained a doctor’s note stating she could safely attend classes through September 2005, long after her scheduled graduation. The school, however, would not reconsider; a guidance counselor delivered her diploma to her house and her name was not included in the graduation program.

On the day of her graduation, the student took the situation into her own hands. She waited until the last senior had been called for her diploma. Then, she stood up in the audience, called her own name and walked across the stage, prompting applause and cheers of support from her classmates, including the father of her child. The student explained, “I worked hard throughout high school and I wanted to walk with my class.”⁸ Afterwards, the student, her mother, and her grandmother were escorted off the premises by police.

Alabama’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁹

- In 2005, 47% of female high school students and 55% of male high school students in Alabama reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 5% of female high school students and 13% of male high school students in Alabama reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 9% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 10% of female high school students and 21% of male high school students in Alabama reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 17% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 38% of female high school students and 38% of male high school students in Alabama reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 60% of females and 65% of males in Alabama reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 56% of females and 70% of males nationwide.

- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 17% of females and 18% of males in Alabama reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 15% of females and 30% of males in Alabama reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 28% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, 88% of high school students in Alabama reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide..
- In 2000, Alabama’s abortion rate was 16 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to an abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁰
- In 2002, Alabama’s birth rate was 55 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹¹

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Alabama received \$955,157 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2005. The Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grant requires states to provide three state-raised dollars or the equivalent in services for every four federal dollars received. The state match may be provided in part or in full by local groups. The state match in Alabama is made up of a combination of state allocation (\$300,000) and local grantees’ contributions. The Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Family Health Services oversees this program and partners with the governor’s office to distribute the funding.

The enumerated goals of the Alabama Abstinence-Only Education Program (AAEP) are to:

- Reduce the pregnancy rate among teens 15 to 17 years of age;
- Reduce the occurrence of STDs among teens 15 to 19 years of age;
- Reduce the abortion rate among teens 15 to 17 years of age;
- Reduce the live birth rate among unmarried teens 15 to 17 years of age; and
- Reduce the occurrence of sexual activity among teens 15 to 17 years of age.

Alabama distributes federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grants to local sub-grantees, including boards of education, youth development centers, and family resource centers. Through these programs, AAEP claims to have reached approximately 34,000 youths ages 17 and younger in 26 of Alabama’s 67 counties.

Ten percent of the funding has been set aside for two separate evaluations to be conducted by Auburn University. One of these evaluations focuses on community-based projects and one will focus on the program’s media campaign. The evaluation of the community-based organizations occurs yearly and reviews both process and outcome. In terms of outcome, it measures participants’ exposure to abstinence messages, attitudes about abstinence, rates of sexual

intercourse, rates of teen pregnancy, STD rates, and rates of teen births. The evaluation of the media campaign will determine if the campaign is reaching the target audience and to what extent the audience has heard the message.

The planning and implementation of the original Title V grant in Alabama was overseen by the State Advisory Committee (SAC), which was comprised of 10 groups, five of which held conservative and/or anti-choice views. These groups included: the Alabama Eagle Forum, the Alabama Family Alliance, Alabama Sav-A-Life, and the Alabama Baptist Convention.

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE)¹² and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are six CBAE grantees in Alabama: Alabama State University, Edge Regional Medical Center (*Abstinence in Motion Project*), Madison County Schools, Teens Empowerment Awareness with Resolutions, Inc., Troy Hospital Corporation/Troy Regional Medical Center, and University of South Alabama. There is one AFLA grantee in Alabama: Alabama State University.

Alabama State University partners with the Gift of Life Foundation to instruct students in 12 junior high and high schools in Montgomery County. During in-classroom instruction, teachers use one of the *Choosing the Best* curricula and pledge cards. SIECUS reviewed both *Choosing the Best PATH* (for junior high school students) and *Choosing the Best LIFE* (for high school students) and found that they name numerous physical and psychological consequences of premarital sexual activity, suggest that sexually active teens will never have happy futures, and imply that only teens with low self-esteem and poor judgment become sexually active. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states that, “relationships often lower the self-respect of both partners—one feeling used, the other feeling like the user. Emotional pain can cause a downward spiral leading to intense feelings of lack of worthlessness.”¹³

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2005

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) www.adph.org/ABSTINENCE	\$955,157 federal \$300,000 state	Title V

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Alabama State University 2004–2007 DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2006 www.alasu.edu	\$740,211 \$225,000	CBAE AFLA
Edge Regional Medical Center (<i>Abstinence in Motion Project</i>) 2002–2005	\$533,925	CBAE
Madison County Schools 2002–2005 www.madison.k12.al.us	\$421,606	CBAE
Teens Empowerment Awareness with Resolutions, Inc. 2005–2008	\$350,405	CBAE
Troy Hospital Corporation/ Troy Regional Medical Center 2002–2005	\$478,154	CBAE
University of South Alabama 2003–2006 www.southalabama.edu	\$797,240	CBAE

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Alabama Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

AIDS Action Coalition of Huntsville,
Alabama
600 St. Clair Ave., Bldg 6
Huntsville, AL 35801
Phone: (256) 536-4700

Alabama Civil Liberties Union
207 Montgomery St., Suite 825
Montgomery, AL 36101
Phone: (334) 262-0304

Planned Parenthood of Alabama
1211 27th Pl. S
Birmingham, AL 35205
Phone: (205) 322-0111
www.ppalabama.org

Alabama Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Alabama Citizens for Life
PO Box 184
Montgomery, AL 36101
Phone: (334) 666-6805

Alabama Policy Institute
402 Office Park Dr., Suite 300
Birmingham, AL 35223
Phone: (205) 870 9900
www.alabamapolicyinstitute.org

The Alabama Pro-Life Coalition
Education Fund, Inc.
PO Box 590008
Birmingham, AL 35259
Phone: (205) 795-1231
www.aplcef.org

National Physicians Center for Family
Resources
PO Box 59692
Birmingham, AL 35259
Phone: (205) 870 0234
www.physicianscenter.org

Newspapers in Alabama

Birmingham Post-Herald
Holly Lang
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 2553
Birmingham, AL 35202
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The Birmingham News
Carla Crowder
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The Birmingham News
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Steve Stewart
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¹ This refers to the fiscal year for the Federal Government, which begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. The fiscal year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, Fiscal Year 2005 begins on October 1, 2004 and ends on September 30, 2005.

² In 2003, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which declared state laws criminalizing homosexual behavior to be unconstitutional.

³ David Granger, "Alabamians Support Neutral, Parent-Approved Sex Education in Schools," *Auburn University News*. Press Release published 27 June 2005.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Erica Pippins, “Pregnant Student Banned from Graduation Walks Stage Anyway,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, 18 May 2005.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: Danice K. Eaton, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 55, no. SS-5 (9 June 2006): 1-108, accessed 8 June 2006, <<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>>.

¹⁰ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: The Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 28 January 2005, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/state_pregnancy_trends.pdf>.

¹¹ *National Vital Statistics Reports 52.10* (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2003), 48, accessed 4 February 2005, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm#stat%20tables>>.

¹² In Fiscal Year 2004 SPRANS–CBAE was administered within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. In Fiscal Year 2005 this funding stream was moved to HHS’ Administration for Children and Families and is now referred to simply as Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE).

¹³ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000); Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best PATH* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000). For more information, see SIECUS’ reviews of *Choosing the Best LIFE* and *Choosing the Best PATH* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.