



ARKANSAS

Arkansas received \$2,807,390 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2005.¹

Arkansas Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Arkansas law does not require schools to teach sexuality education or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. If a school offers sexuality or STD/HIV education, abstinence must be stressed.

Arkansas maintains curriculum standards for physical and health education; however, these do not include specific guidelines pertaining to the content of sexuality education courses. According to the Department of Education, course content is left to the discretion of the local school districts and varies widely from school to school. There is also no system of evaluation in place to monitor the subject matter covered in health education classes across the state.

School-based health clinics may teach sexuality education and may also prescribe and distribute contraceptives with written parental consent; however, no state funds may be used to purchase condoms or contraceptives. These school-based health clinics must maintain records of the number of condoms and other contraceptive devices distributed and prescribed, as well as the number of pregnancies and STDs in the school. This information must remain confidential. Clinics may not give information about abortions or refer students to where they might find such information.

The Arkansas Department of Health provides some sexuality education throughout the state, working predominantly in high schools and churches in rural areas with a focus on condom demonstration and distribution.

Arkansas does not require parental permission for students to participate in sexuality or HIV/AIDS education nor does it say whether parents or guardians can remove their children from such classes.

See Arkansas Code 6-18-703.

Recent Legislation

Arkansas does not have a regular legislative session in 2006 and did not carry bills over from 2005. SIECUS is not aware of any legislation in the 2005 session related to sexuality education in Arkansas.

Events of Note

Book About Sexuality Allowed to Remain on Shelves

March 2005; Fayetteville, AR

After a materials-evaluation committee of the school board ruled against complaints issued by a concerned parent, the Fayetteville school district decided to keep Robie Harris' book *It's Perfectly Normal* on library shelves.

During a school board meeting in late February 2005, a parent of a McNair Middle School student voiced complaints about three books—*The Teenage Guy's Survival Guide*, by Jeremy Daldry and *It's So Amazing* and *It's Perfectly Normal*, both by Robie Harris—available in the school district's libraries and suggested that they be removed from the collection. Interestingly, *It's Perfectly Normal* was not available in her child's library as it had been lost; however, the parent stated that she learned of the book from "Point of View," a Christian radio show, and later found out that it was available elsewhere in the school district. She explained that she felt the pictures were too sexually explicit and that the book encouraged children to experiment with "both heterosexuality and homosexuality."²

As a result of her complaint, the school district created a seven-member committee to review *It's Perfectly Normal*. Each committee member received a copy of the book to review, in effect forcing the school to order six additional copies. The committee decided the book should be allowed to remain in general circulation in junior high libraries (though currently there are no copies available) and will be available in parent libraries in middle schools and elementary schools. In middle schools, a student may check out the book only with the approval of both an educator and a counselor or administrator.

Arkansas' Youth: Statistical Information of Note³

- In 2005, 54% of female high school students and 54% of male high school students in Arkansas reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 6% of female high school students and 13% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 16% of female high school students and 21% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 42% of female high school students and 39% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 49% of females and 65% of males in Arkansas 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, 23% of females and 17% of males in Arkansas 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, 17% of females and 27% of males in Arkansas 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, 84% of high school students in Arkansas reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Arkansas' abortion rate was 12 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁴
- In 2002, Arkansas' birth rate was 60 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Arkansas received \$587,519 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 full by local groups. Arkansas does not use state funds for the match; instead, sub-grantees provide the match. The Arkansas Department of Health has authority over the “Arkansas Abstinence Education Program.”

In Fiscal Year 1998, the Arkansas Abstinence Education Program was combined with the state's Unwed Birth Reduction Program, a more comprehensive effort that was created by the state legislature. The Abstinence Education Program also coordinates with Arkansas' county-level Welfare Reform Coalitions. The Abstinence Education Program does not target any specific age group, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic level; however, the county-level groups are free to target participants based on any of these criteria. The Governor's Steering Committee, made up of youth, state legislators, religious leaders, and community members, also provides oversight of the program.

For Fiscal Year 2005, the Arkansas Abstinence Education Program distributed Title V funds to 13 sub-grantees including: Abstinence By Choice, Inc., CALEB Initiative, Inc./GFM, Earle School District, Excel Upward, Fountain Lake High School, Healthy Kids, Inc., Lee County Family Resource Center, Office of Human Concern, Prim-N-Proper, Shining Light Foundation, St. Bernard's Development Foundation, Stuttgart Public School, and Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. The sub-grantees use a variety of curricula including *Baby Think it Over*, *Choosing the Best*, *Heritage Keepers*, *A.C. Green's Game Plan*, *Worth the Wait*, and *Sex Respect*.

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.”⁶

SIECUS reviewed *Game Plan* and found that in order to convince high school students to remain abstinent until marriage, the curriculum relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage, sexual orientation, and family structure. In addition, *Game Plan* fails to provide important information on sexual health, including how students can seek testing and treatment if they suspect they may have an STD. Finally, the format and underlying biases of the curriculum do not allow for cultural, community, and individual values, and discourage critical thinking and discussions of alternate points of view in the classroom. For example, *Game Plan* states, “even if you’ve been sexually active, it’s never too late to say no. You can’t go back, but you can go forward. You might feel guilty or untrustworthy, but you can start over again.”⁷

SIECUS reviewed *Sex Respect* and found that in order to convince students to remain abstinent until marriage, the curriculum presents opinions and beliefs as universal truths; relies on messages of fear and shame; provides outdated and inaccurate medical information; and portrays a biased view of gender, marriage, family structure, pregnancy options, sexual orientation, and race and social class. The format and underlying biases of the curriculum do not allow for cultural, community, and individual values, and discourage critical thinking or discussions of alternate points of view in the classroom. For example, *Sex Respect* advises: “set ending time for your date before you go out. Be home on time. Don’t invite your date in. Lead yourselves not into temptation.”⁸

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE)⁹ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are six CBAE grantees in Arkansas: Abstinence by Choice, Inc., Catherine’s House, Centers for Youth and Families, Fayetteville Public Schools, Prim ‘n Proper/Choosing to EXCEL, and Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. There are no AFLA grantees in Arkansas.

Abstinence by Choice runs a three-to-five day program of the same name aimed at eighth graders. According to the organization’s website, “the topics are Self-Esteem and Risk-Taking Behaviors, Tough Choices of Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Dating Strategies.” Students are divided into small groups by gender, and given a workbook that contains additional information, corresponding discussion questions, and homework assignments for each topic. Students also hear from speakers such as counselors from a crisis pregnancy and adoption center, youth from local organizations, and “women and men who have personally experienced the painful consequences of premarital sex.” At the end of each session, students are given the opportunity to sign a pledge promising to be “abstinent from this day forward.”¹⁰

Research has found that under certain conditions such pledges, most commonly called virginity pledges, may help some adolescents delay sexual intercourse. When they work, pledges help this select group of adolescents delay the onset of sexual intercourse for an average of 18 months—far short of marriage. Researchers found that pledges only worked when taken by a small group of students. Pledges taken by a whole class were ineffective. More importantly, the studies also found that those young people who took a pledge were one-third less likely to use contraception when they did become sexually active than their peers who had not pledged. These teens are therefore more vulnerable to the risks of unprotected sexual activity, such as

unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Further research has confirmed that although some students who take pledges delay intercourse, ultimately they are equally as likely to contract an STD as their non-pledging peers. The study also found that the STD rates were higher in communities where a significant proportion (over 20%) of the young people had taken virginity pledges.¹¹

Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. is a faith-based organization that, according to its website, works under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹² The organization uses the *Choosing the Best* curricula (please see the section above for more information). In addition to the problems found in these curricula, the Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. website contains numerous medical inaccuracies. For example, the website explains, “the best way to diagnose Chlamydia is through a blood test.”¹³ In actuality, Chlamydia cannot be diagnosed through a blood test, but can only be detected through a urine test or a swab of the inside of the urethra for men or the urethra or cervix for women.

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)
Arkansas Department of Health www.healthyarkansas.com	\$587,519 federal	Title V
Abstinence by Choice, Inc. DUAL GRANTEE 2002–2005 www.abstinencebychoice.org	\$124,882 \$172,237	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
CALEB Initiative/ Greater Fellowship Ministries	\$79,652	Title V sub-grantee
Fountain Lake High School	\$30,548	Title V sub-grantee
Healthy Kids, Inc.	\$191,499	Title V sub-grantee
Lee County Family Resource Center	\$33,751	Title V sub-grantee
Office of Human Concern	\$49,352	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V CBAE, and AFLA)
Prim 'n Proper/ Choosing to Excel DUAL GRANTEE 2002–2005 www.choosingtoexcel.org	\$82,514 \$339,842	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Shining Light Foundation	\$47,543	Title V sub-grantee
St. Bernard's Development Foundation	\$44,433	Title V sub-grantee
Stuttgart Public Schools www.sps.k12.ar.us	\$76,741	Title V sub-grantee
Tree of Life Prevention Health Maintenance DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2008	\$137,741 \$726,164	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Catherine's House 2002–2005	\$255,500	CBAE
Centers for Youth and Families 2005–2008 www.youthandfamilies.org	\$279,029	CBAE
Fayetteville Public Schools 2004–2007 www.fayar.net	\$447,099	CBAE

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Arkansas Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Arkansas
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Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 374-2660

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Arkansas
5512 W. Markham
Little Rock, AR 72205
Phone: (501) 666-7526

Arkansas Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Arkansas Family Council
414 S. Pulaski, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 375-7000
www.familycouncil.org

Newspapers in Arkansas

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Danny Shameer
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 2221
Little Rock, AR 72203
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Jonesboro Sun
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The Morning News
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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 B. Bennett, "Committee: Book is Perfectly Normal," *Northwest Arkansas' News Source*, 10 March 2005, accessed 18 March 2005, <<http://www.nwanews.com/story.php?paper=nwat§ion=News&storyid=26042>>.

³ 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>>.

⁴ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 28 January 2005 <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/state_pregnancy_trends.pdf>.

⁵ *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>>.

⁶ 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>.

⁷ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A.C. Green's Game Plan* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2001). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *A.C. Green's Game Plan* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

⁸ Coleen Kelly Mast, *Sex Respect: The Option for True Sexual Freedom* (Bradley, IL: Sex Respect, 2001). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Sex Respect* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ *Abstinence by Choice*, *Abstinence by Choice* (2005), accessed 9 February 2005, <<http://www.abstinencebychoice.org>>.

¹¹ Peter Bearman and Hannah Brückner "Promising the Future: Virginity Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse," *American Journal of Sociology* 106.4 (2001): 859-912.; Peter Bearman and Hannah Brückner, "After the promise: The STD consequences of adolescent virginity pledges," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36.4 (2005): 271-278.

¹² *Tree of Life – Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc.*, Arkansas Communities, accessed 26 January 2006, <<http://arkansascommunities.com/Fort%20Smith/treeoflife.htm>>.

¹³ *Chlamydia*, Arkansas Communities, accessed 26 January 2006 <<http://arkansascommunities.com/LittleRock/viewproduct.asp?item=b574c>>.