



COLORADO

Colorado received \$2,351,266 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Colorado Sexuality Education Law

Colorado school districts can decide whether to teach sexuality education and may address the subject in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The Colorado Department of Education is charged with providing guidelines as to the length of courses, the subjects included, and the manner in which these subjects are addressed. The department also provides guidelines on teacher training in sexuality education which includes information about high-risk behaviors. Whenever sexuality education and/or human reproduction is taught, teachers must emphasize abstinence.

Parents or guardians must be notified if a sexuality education course is taught and given an opportunity to review the curriculum. Parents may send written notice that they do not want their child to attend all or part of sexuality education. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

However, if a school receives state funding to teach sexuality education, then parents must receive written notification about the topics and materials to be presented and must give permission before a student can participate in “any program discussing or teaching sexuality and human reproduction.” This is referred to as an “opt-in” policy.

See Colorado Statutes 22-25-104, 22-25-110 and 25-4-1405.

Recent Legislation

SIECUS is not aware of any recent legislation related to sexuality education in Colorado.

Events of Note

*School District Considers New Sex Education Curricula
November 2004; Fort Collins, CO*

The Poudre School District (PSD) is considering a curriculum created by its Health Curriculum Advisory Board. The Health Curriculum Advisory Board is made up of parents, community representatives, PSD staff, members of the faith community, and one student.

The school has been debating various sexuality education curricula for over two years. During the last school year, the original Health Curriculum Advisory Board recommended two new sexuality education curricula, *Sex Can Wait* and *Reducing the Risk*, to the Board of Education. After a number of heated community debates, however, the board decided to postpone the curriculum decision, hire an outside consultant, and add more voices to the Health Curriculum Advisory Board, particularly more members of the community. Though there was

continued debate over the members of the Advisory Board, including a petition drive to protest a member who directs an abortion-rights group, the school brought together a more diverse group and moved forward with their plan to find an effective sexuality education program.

The advisory board created a curriculum which it has now posted on its website for public input. The science facilitator for PSD explained, “the members of the Health Board believe it is very important to have public input on the entire curriculum....Over the next few months, the curriculum framework will be available to review in great detail—including goals and objectives for each lesson, activities, teacher resources, approved speakers, and student resources.”² The Board of Education president said, “although we are aware that it is impossible to produce a sex-education curriculum that will be universally accepted, we’re hopeful that this community feedback process will help us identify any remaining major issues before the formal ratification process begins.”³

The Advisory Board's curriculum includes information on both abstinence and contraception and emphasizes abstinence as the only 100 % effective method of prevention.

*Colorado Supreme Court Finds School Voucher Program Unconstitutional
June 2004; Denver, CO*

The Colorado Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Colorado PTA and others deciding that the state constitution clearly states that local school districts should retain control over locally raised funds. A voucher program, signed into law on April 16, 2003, proposed using public money to assist students in under-performing school districts by paying part or all of their tuition if they attend any number of private or religious schools that had been approved by the state board of education. The law was immediately challenged and was never allowed to take effect.

In October 2003, 82 private schools applied to the Denver Public Schools (DPS) to participate in the voucher program. Some of the applicants included the American Christian Academy of Englewood, which describes itself as “unashamedly Christian” with a “Bible-based curriculum free of humanism and new age philosophies.”⁴ Other schools, like Silver State Baptist of Lakewood made it clear that students participating in premarital sex, homosexuality, or sexual perversion would be automatically dismissed.⁵ Fifty-three of the applicants listed a religious affiliation ranging from Baptist to Muslim. State law only allows the DPS to turn down applicants for a short list of reasons, including failure to meet health or safety codes or financial instability. DPS can reject the application of a school that is discriminating on race or religion, but not sexual orientation.

The Colorado Supreme Court decision did not address the issue of providing government funding to schools that blatantly promote religion. Instead, the decision focused on how funding the program contradicted the school financial system set up in the state constitution.⁶ National Education Association (NEA) President Reg Weaver stated “if policymakers listen to teachers and parents they will discover that Americans, by overwhelming numbers, support investing in efforts to improve existing public schools rather than funding alternative systems, such as private-school tuition vouchers.”⁷

Colorado's Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁸

- In 2003, 38% of female high school students and 40% of male high school students in Colorado reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 2% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students in Colorado reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 11% of female high school students and 13% of male high school students in Colorado reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 11% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 29% of female high school students and 26% of male high school students in Colorado reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, 6% of female high school students and 4% of male high school students in Colorado reported ever having been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant compared to 5% of female high school students and 4% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 85% of high school students in Colorado reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 27% of females and 37% of males in Colorado reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 31% of males nationwide.⁹
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 59% of females and 75% of males in Colorado reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 51% of females and 65% of males nationwide.¹⁰
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 21% of females and 13% of males in Colorado reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.¹¹
- In 2000, Colorado's abortion rate was 19 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹²
- In 2002, Colorado's birth rate was 47 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹³

- In 2001, Colorado’s rate of reported Chlamydia cases was 2,367 per 100,000 females ages 15-19 and 389 per 100,000 males ages 15-19.¹⁴
- In 2001, Colorado’s rate of reported gonorrhea cases was 344.2 per 100,000 females ages 15-19 and 121.6 per 100,000 males ages 15-19.¹⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Colorado received \$544,383 in federal Title V funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004. The federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grant requires states to provide three state-raised dollars or the equivalent in services for every four dollars of federal dollars received. The state match can be provided in part or in full by local groups. Colorado provides no matching funds; instead, funds are provided by local sub-grantees. The funding is controlled by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment which formed the State Abstinence Education Steering Committee. The committee allocates money to eight community based sub-grantees that use a variety of curricula, with the majority using *Choosing the Best*, *WAIT Training*, *Game Plan*, and/or *Friends First*. These curricula were recently reviewed in a report prepared for U.S. Representative Henry Waxman, *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*. All of them were found to have “major errors and distortions of public health information.”¹⁶

SIECUS has also reviewed *Choosing the Best*, *WAIT Training*, and *Game Plan*. SIECUS found that *Choosing the Best LIFE* names numerous physical and psychological consequences of premarital sexual activity, suggests that sexually active teens will never have a happy future, and implies that only teens with low self-esteem and poor judgment become sexually active. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states: “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.”¹⁷

SIECUS found that *WAIT Training* contained little medical or biological information and almost no information about STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), including HIV/AIDS. Instead, it contains information and statistics about marriage, many of which are outdated and not supported by scientific research. It also contains messages of fear and shame and biased views of gender, sexual orientation, and family type. For example *WAIT Training* explains: “men sexually are like microwaves and women sexually are like crockpots....A woman is stimulated more by touch and romantic words. She is far more attracted by a man’s personality while a man is stimulated by sight. A man is usually less discriminating about those to whom he is physically attracted.”¹⁸

SIECUS found that in order to convince high school students to remain abstinent until marriage, *Game Plan* 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.”¹⁹

The Colorado Abstinence Education Program has also developed a multimedia campaign that utilizes television commercials and an interactive website (www.saynoway.net). In addition to a quiz, dating tips, and resources for parents, the website also includes a page dedicated to statistics. Some of the statistics listed include:

- Seven out of 10 adolescent mothers drop out of high school;
- Only 30 percent of girls who become pregnant at the age of 17 or younger will earn a high school diploma by the age of 30; and
- The teenage sons of adolescent mothers are 2.7 times more likely to spend time in prison than the sons of mothers who delay childbearing until their early 20s.²⁰

The television commercials also contain messages of fear and shame that seemed aimed at young women. One commercial shows a teen at her locker telling the audience “I’m not going to be that girl that gets drunk or high and then has a one night stand and regrets it later.”²¹

Colorado’s Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage project focuses on youth between the ages of 10 and 17 with a special emphasis on youth 10 to 14 years of age. Specifically, it focuses on youth from low income areas as well as African-American youth, Latino/a youth, Native America youth, Spanish-speaking youth, youth with special needs, and parents.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)²² and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees:

There are three SPRANS–CBAE grantees in Colorado: Bethany Crisis Pregnancy Center, Friends First, and Pueblo Youth Project. There is one AFLA grantee: Colorado State University.

Friends First provides speakers and trainings for parents, students, teachers, and policymakers. It also runs after-school and mentoring programs for youth. Friends First created and uses the *WAIT (Why Am I Tempted) Training* curriculum. SIECUS’ review of *WAIT Training* found that this curriculum contains messages of fear and shame and biased views on gender, sexual orientation, and family type.

Friends First’s website includes a question and answer section specifically for parents. One question asks: “What do I do about this aggressive teen-age girl that is ‘coming-on’ to my son?” The answer states:

Many guys feel intense pressure from girls in their peer group. The girls mature faster and have false expectations and ideals about their sexuality from the culture, especially if a lack of parental communication and boundary setting exists in the home.²³

A factsheet entitled, “Cost of Teen Pregnancies: You Are Paying for Government Repair Programs,” states that married people have a lower risk of mental illness and suicide.²⁴

C O L O R A D O

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2004

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/abstinence/abstinencehom.asp	\$544,383	Title V
Center Consolidated Schools www.center.k12.co.us	\$39,400	Title V sub-grantee
Durango Life Foundation	\$64,890	Title V sub-grantee
FACT Foundation	\$65,000	Title V sub-grantee
Friends First DUAL GRANTEE 2003-2006 www.friendsfirst.org	\$65,000 \$630,222	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation grant)
Jim Elliot Schools www.jimelliotschools.org	\$25,765	Title V sub-grantee
Pueblo Youth Project DUAL GRANTEE 2003-2006	\$65,000 \$319,788	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation grant)

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Save Our Youth www.saveouryouth.org	\$41,754	Title V sub-grantee
Weld County Health Department www.co.weld.co.us/departments/health/publichealth.html	\$65,000	Title V sub-grantee
Bethany Crisis Pregnancy Center 2003-2006	\$631,873	SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation grant)
Colorado State University 2004-2005 http://welcome.colostate.edu	\$225,000	AFLA

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Colorado Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Colorado
 400 Corona St.
 Denver, CO 80218
 Phone: (303) 777-5482
www.aclu-co.org

Colorado AIDS Project
 701 E. Colfax, Suite 212
 PO Box 18529
 Denver, CO 80203
 Phone: (303) 837-0166
www.coloradoaidsproject.org

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The FENIX Project (sponsored by
Mi Casa Resource Center for Women)
360 Acoma St.
Denver CO 80223
Phone: (303) 573-1302
www.aidscentral.com/FENIX

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender
Community Center of Colorado
PO Box 9798
Denver, CO 80209
Phone: (303) 733-7743
www.coloradoglbt.org

NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado
1905 Sherman St., Suite 800
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303) 394-1973
www.prochoicecolorado.org

Planned Parenthood of the Rocky
Mountains
950 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: (303) 321-PLAN
www.pprm.org

Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Choice
PO Box 370414
Denver, CO 80237
Phone: (303) 756-9996
www.corcrc.org

Colorado Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Colorado Right to Life Committee
2050 S. Oneida St., Suite 116
Denver, CO 80224
Phone: (303) 753-9394
www.coloradorighttolife.org

Focus on the Family
8605 Explorer Dr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80995
Phone: (800) 232-6459
www.family.org

Independence Institute
13952 Denver West Pkwy., Suite 400
Golden, CO 80401
Phone: (303) 279-6536
www.i2i.org

Rocky Mountain Family Council
8704 Yates Dr., Suite 205
Westminster, CO 80030
Phone: (303) 292-1800
www.rmfc.org

Youth for Christ
7670 S. Vaughn Ct.
Englewood, CO 80112
Phone: (303) 843-9000
www.gospelcom.net/yfc

Newspapers in Colorado

Daily Camera

Lisa Marshall
Medical/Health Editor
1048 Pearl St.
Boulder, CO 80302
Phone: (303) 473-1357

Daily Reporter-Herald

Kelly Serrano
Medical/Health Reporter
201 E. 5th St.
Loveland, CO 80537
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The Daily Sentinel

Anna Beaty
Medical/Health Writer
734 S. 7th St.
Grand Junction, CO 81501
Phone: (970) 256-4310

Daily Times-Call

Joe Southern
Community News Writer
350 Terry St.
Longmont, CO 80501
Phone: (303) 776-2244

Denver Post

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Health & Medicine Staff Writer
1560 Broadway
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Phone: (303) 820-1733

Fort Collins Coloradoan

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Medical/Health Reporter
1212 Riverside Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80524
Phone: (970) 224-7757

The Gazette

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Health & Medicine Writer
PO Box 1779
Colorado Springs, CO 80901
Phone: (719) 636-0272

Greeley Tribune

Annie Hundley
Community News Reporter
501 8th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80631
Phone: (970) 352-0211

The Pueblo Chieftain

Karen Vigil
Medical/Health Reporter
825 W. 6th St.
Pueblo, CO 81003
Phone: (719) 544-3520

Rocky Mountain News

Mike Pearson
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 719
Denver, CO 80201
Phone: (303)892-2592

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 2004 begins on October 1, 2003 and ends on September 30, 2004.

² *Health Curriculum Under Review*, Poudre School District, accessed 7 January 2005, <<http://www.psd.k12.co.us/psdinfo/newsevents/index.aspx?newseventid=1151&affid=>>.

³ Stacy Nick, "PSD Seeks Input on Sex Education," *Fort Collins Coloradoan* (CO), 15 November 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis on 7 January 2005.

⁴ Nancy Mitchell and Robert Sanchez, "No Lack of Variety in Voucher Schools," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 October 2003.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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- ⁶ Colorado Education Association, “Supreme Court Rejects State’s Voucher Plan,” Press Release published 29 June 2004, accessed 14 January 2005, <<http://www.coloradoea.org/whatsnew/june29voucher.cfm>>.
- ⁷ National Education Association “Colorado Supreme Court Strikes Down Voucher Law,” Press Release published June 2004, accessed 14 January 2005, <<http://www.nea.org/vouchers/colosupremecourt.html>>.
- ⁸ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from “2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results,” *Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment*, Health Statistics, Denver, CO, accessed 3 February 2005, <<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/yrbs/2003.html>>. Results for Colorado’s 2003 YRBS survey are unweighted because of an overall low response rate and were not included in the national YRBS report.
- ⁹ Jo Anne Grunbaum, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2001,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 51.SS-4, (28 June 2002), 1-64, accessed 28 January 2005, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>>.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, February, 2004), accessed 28 January 2005, <www.guttmacher.org>.
- ¹³ *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>>.
- ¹⁴ Ned Calonge, et. al., “Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Colorado Surveillance Report: 2001,” (Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, August 2003), accessed 3 February 2005, <<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/dcnew.asp>>.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*, prepared for Representative Henry A. Waxman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform—Minority Staff Special Investigations Division (December 2004), accessed 10 December 2004, <<http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/Documents/20041201102153-50247.pdf>>.
- ¹⁷ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE-Student Workbook* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000), 9.
- ¹⁸ *WAIT Training-Workshop Manual* (Longmont, CO: Friends First, 1996), 39.
- ¹⁹ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A.C. Green’s Game Plan* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2001), 45.
- ²⁰ *Statistics, Its OK to Say No Way* (2004), accessed 9 January 2005, <<http://www.saynoway.net/stats.shtml>>.
- ²¹ *Say No Way TV Commercials, Its OK to Say No Way* (2004), accessed 9 January 2005, <<http://www.saynoway.net/tvads.shtml>>.
- ²² In FY 2004 SPRANS–CBAE was administered within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. In FY 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).
- ²³ *FAQ*, Friends First, accessed 9 February 2005 <<http://www.friendsfirst.org/faqs.asp>>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.