



SIECUS

State Profile

MAINE

Community-based organizations in Maine received \$664,000 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Maine Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Maine's sexuality education law is one of the most comprehensive in the country; it mandates that the state "undertake initiatives to implement effective, comprehensive family life education services." The state must provide:

- training for teachers, parents, and community members;
- forums among youth and community members in communities with a high need for sexuality education;
- staff to provide trainings, develop curricula, and evaluate the program;
- funding for issue management and policy development training for school boards, superintendents, principals, and administrators; and
- funding for programs that have shown outstanding work around sexuality education.

"Comprehensive family life education" must be taught in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The information provided must be medically accurate and age-appropriate, and must respect community values and encourage parent-child communication. Programs must teach about abstinence, healthy relationships, contraception, and conflict resolution. No specific curriculum is mandated.

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 Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, Chapter 406, Sections 1902, 1910, and 1911.

Recent Legislation

Legislation Requires Standards for Family Life Skills

House Bill 745, introduced in March 2007, would have required the existing system of learning standards to include the subject area of "family life skills." Students would have been required to study and demonstrate proficiency in subject areas including healthcare choices and family dynamics. The bill was sent to the Senate Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, but failed to pass.

Events of Note

SIECUS is not aware of any recent events regarding sexuality education in Maine.

Maine's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- In 2007, 45% of female high school students and 46% of male high school students in Maine reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 4% of female high school students and 6% of male high school students in Maine 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 2007, 12% of female high school students and 12% of male high school students in Maine reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 35% of female high school students and 31% of male high school students in Maine reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 36% of female high school students and 34% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 51% of females and 69% of males in Maine reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 55% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 41% of females and 30% of males in Maine reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 13% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 16% of females and 25% of males in Maine reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 18% of females and 28% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, 87% of high school students in Maine reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 90% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

The Department of Human Services would have been eligible for \$161,398 in federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2007. 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. Had Maine taken the funds the state would have been required to match the money with \$121,048. However, the state does not apply for these funds due to the extraordinary restrictions upon how the money must be spent. Therefore, the state does not match funds nor does it have organizations supported by this type of federal money.

On September 20, 2005, Maine officials announced their decision to reject Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding. With this action, Maine became one of the first states to reject this ideologically biased funding.

Dr. Dora Anne Mills, the state's public health director, stated that tighter federal control of the funding and its growing inconsistency with state law made it difficult for Maine to continue its more inclusive media campaign. (The state had already decided that due to Maine law, which mandates a comprehensive approach to sexuality education, abstinence-only-until-marriage funding could not be used in schools.) Dr. Mills also worried that this funding would not allow the state to help sexually active young people or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.³

Earlier that same month, the Maine Department of Education sent a letter to all school superintendents stating that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs do not fulfill the requirements of Maine law.⁴ At the time, Dr. Mills referred to abstinence-only-until-marriage funding as “ideological money” and said, “Studies show over and over again when youth are given full information, including abstinence, they make the healthiest choices possible.”⁵

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

There is one CBAE grantee in Maine: Maine Character Resource (MCR). There is one AFLA grantee in Maine: People's Regional Opportunity Program.

Maine Character Resource (formerly Heritage of Maine and Character Counts of Maine) uses “The Heritage Method” created by Heritage Community Services of South Carolina.⁶ According to its brochure, Maine Character Resource (MCR) offers a series of five, 90-minute classes for students in grades seven through 12; a “Pop” Program with shorter classes highlighting only part of the program; school assemblies; Heritage Keepers Club in schools, churches, and other community groups for students who have completed the program; information sessions about the program for communities; and a multi-session parent course.

The organization also offers a school consultation in which a trained abstinence-only-until-marriage program instructor works with health teachers and curriculum directors to review a school's health curriculum and “suggest changes that will satisfy the Maine law for teaching abstinence education.”⁷ Maine law, however, requires comprehensive family life education which must provide education about sexuality including human development, family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases. According to the law, such education must follow a number of different criteria, including addressing the use of contraception and promoting responsible sexual behavior with an emphasis on abstinence. (See the Law and Policy section for more information about Maine's law.)

In fact, in 2005 the state refused to allow MCR (then Heritage of Maine) to hold its programs in Maine schools because its curricula do not meet the comprehensive health education requirements for the state.⁸ Nevertheless, MCR's website encourages parents, community groups, and schools to invite the organization in. Its website urges interested individuals to “coordinate with other parents and co-sign a letter of request asking to bring Heritage Keepers' authentic abstinence program to your school.”⁹

MCR's website also posts testimonials from young people who have been through its program. One teen wrote, “We really enjoyed your class very much and we also love the skits and role playing, and fireplace activity (Sex is Like Fire).”¹⁰ This is a reference to the Heritage Keepers' curriculum. SIECUS reviewed *Heritage Keepers, Abstinence Education I* and found that it contains very little information about important topics in human sexuality such as puberty, anatomy, and sexual behavior. Even topics that are frequently discussed in detail in other abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, such as condoms and STDs, receive very little mention. Instead, the curriculum devotes most of its lessons to the importance of marriage and abstinence before marriage. It relies on messages of fear and shame and promotes biased

views of gender, marriage, and pregnancy options. *Heritage Keepers* also uses an elaborate analogy of fire to underscore its message that sexual activity outside of marriage is a risky behavior. The teacher is told to narrate a scene about fire in a fireplace as if the students are there and to use highly evocative words like “cozy,” “comfy,” “toasty,” “warm,” and “nice.” Students are asked to add to the scene describing the fire and how it makes them feel. The teacher then changes the scene to discuss the possibility of creating a fire in the middle of the living room and is told, “Although building fire in a room without a fireplace is, of course, a ridiculous idea, the tone of your delivery and the details and explanations you include should treat it as reasonable. Mention sensible-sounding precautions, such as opening the windows for ventilation, building the fire in a trash can...” In the scenario, despite these precautions, the fire escapes from the “insufficient, provisional boundary” and the teacher is told narrate the “consequences, the burning of the room and its contents.” This time descriptions of the fire include “dangerous,” “painful,” “devastating,” and “scary.”¹¹

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2007

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Maine Character Resource (Heritage of Maine) 2004–2007 www.mainecharacterresource.org/	\$499,000	CBAE
People’s Regional Opportunity Program 2003–2008 www.propeople.org	\$165,000	AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact¹²

Nancy Birkhimer
 Teen and Young Adult Health Program
 Bureau of Health, Department of Human Services
 11 State House Station, Key Bank Plaza, 5th Floor
 Augusta, ME 04333
 Phone: (207) 287-5361

M A I N E

Maine Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Family Planning Association of Maine
P.O. Box 587
Augusta, ME 04332
Phone: (207) 662-7524
www.mainefamilyplanning.org

Maine Civil Liberties Union
401 Cumberland Ave., Suite 105
Portland, ME 04101
Phone: (207) 774-5444
www.mclu.org

Planned Parenthood of Northern New
England
51 US Route 1, Suite C
Scarborough, ME
Phone: 1-800-854-9762
www.ppnne.org

Maine Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Christian Civic League of Maine
70 Sewall St.
Augusta, ME 04330
Phone: (207) 622-7634
www.cclmaine.org

Newspapers in Maine¹³

Bangor Daily News
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1329
Bangor, ME 04402
Phone: (207) 990-8000
www.bangornews.com

Kennebec Journal
Newsroom
274 Western Ave.
Augusta, ME 04330
Phone: (207) 623-3811
kennebecjournal.mainetoday.com

Journal Tribune
Newsroom
457 Alfred Rd.
Biddeford, ME 04005
Phone: (207) 282-1535
www.journaltribune.com

Morning Sentinel
Newsroom
31 Front St.
Waterville, ME 04901
Phone: (207) 621-5645
morningsentinel.mainetoday.com

The Portland Phoenix
Newsroom
16 York St.
Portland, ME 04101
Phone: (207) 773-8900
thephoenix.com/Portland

Portland Press Herald
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1460
Portland, ME 04104
Phone: (207) 791-6650
pressherald.mainetoday.com/

M A I N E

Sun Journal
Newsroom
104 Park St.
Lewiston, ME 04240
Phone: (207) 784-5411
www.sunjournal.com

The Times Record
Newsroom
3 Business Pkwy.
Brunswick, ME 04011
Phone: (207) 729-3311
www.timesrecord.com

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 2007 begins on October 1, 2006 and ends on September 30, 2007.

² Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from Danice K. Eaton, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2007,” Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 57.SS-4 (6 June 2008), accessed 4 June 2008, <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

³ Paul Carrier, “Abstinence Message Too Weak, Official Says,” *Portland Press Herald*, 3 October 2005, accessed 12 October 2005, <<http://pressherald.maine.com/news/state/051003abstinence.shtml>>.

⁴ Mark Peters, “Maine Schools Shun \$500,000 Sex-Ed Course,” *Portland Press Herald*, 6 September 2005, accessed on Lexis Nexis, 10 April 2006.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “About Us,” Maine Character Resource, (2008), accessed 16 January 2008, <<http://www.mainecharacterresource.org/aboutus.aspx>>.

⁷ “Resources for Teachers, Parents, & Communities,” Maine Character Resource, accessed 16 January 2008, <<http://www.mainecharacterresource.org/pictures/files/MCRResourceBrochure.pdf>>.

⁸ Zach Anchors, “Teaching Students About ‘Character’—Abstinence Education Offered In Addition To SMS Health Curriculum,” *Scarborough Leader*, 2 March 2007, accessed 16 January 2008, <<http://blog.scarboroughleader.com/2007/02/02/teaching-students-about-character-abstinence-education-offered-in-addition-to-sms-health-curriculum.aspx>>.

⁹ “For Community Groups: Tools for Community Support,” Maine Character Resource, (2008), accessed 16 January 2008, <<http://www.mainecharacterresource.org/toolsforcommunitysupport.aspx>>.

¹⁰ “For Teens: True Stories,” Maine Character Resource (2008), accessed 16 January 2008, <<http://www.mainecharacterresource.org/truestories.aspx>>.

¹¹ Anne Badgley and Carrie Musselman, *Heritage Keepers Teacher’s Manual* (Charleston, SC: Heritage Community Services, 1999). For more information, see SIECUS’ review of *Heritage Keepers* at <<http://www.communityactionkit.org/reviews/HeritageKeepers.html>>.

¹² SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹³ This section is a list of major newspapers in your state with contact information for their newsrooms. This list is by no means inclusive and does not contain the local level newspapers which are integral to getting your message out to your community. SIECUS strongly urges you to follow stories about the issues that concern you on the national, state, and local level by using an internet news alert service such as [Google alerts](#), becoming an avid reader of your local papers, and establishing relationships with reporters who cover your issues. For more information on how to achieve your media goals visit the SIECUS [Community Action Kit](#).