



MARYLAND

Maryland received \$1,234,063 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Maryland Sexuality Education Law

Maryland education code requires each county school board to work with the county health department in establishing a school health education program with a number of specified goals.

Sexuality education falls under Goal F, which is designed to help students “recognize the family as a basic unit of society that perpetuates life and promotes healthy growth and development.” Under Goal F, schools must help students “develop and use skills for making responsible decisions about sexual behavior based on its consequences for the individual and others” and “develop and use skills for making responsible decisions about family planning and preventing pregnancy.”

Goal F also includes teaching students about “[a] variety of family structures and roles of family members,” “male and female roles in American society,” “sexual variations,” “contraception,” and “family planning.”

Maryland education code requires that health education classes be taught in kindergarten through twelfth grade, in mixed gender groups. It also directs when certain topics may and may not be addressed. For example, the code says, “direct teaching of human reproduction may not begin earlier than age 10 or later than age 12.”

Maryland State Regulations also mandate that “local school systems shall provide annual instruction in AIDS to all students at least once in grades three to six, six to nine, and nine to twelve.”

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

See Maryland Regulations 13A.04.18.02, 13A.04.18.03, and 13A.04.18.04.

Recent Legislation

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

Events of Note

Montgomery County Board of Education Passes New Health Education Curriculum November 2004; Montgomery County, MD

In November 2004, Montgomery County’s Board of Education unanimously passed revisions to its health education curriculum which will now include a video that shows students in the tenth grade how to put on a condom. The board also approved a pilot program in selected schools that will address homosexuality. Updates to the curriculum were recommended by the Family Life and Human Development Advisory Committee. The committee is comprised

of 29 volunteer members and is one of four advisory committees to the Montgomery County Board of Education.

The decision to incorporate the video of a condom demonstration is part of a long history of an evolving health education curriculum. Maryland requires county school boards to work with their county health departments to establish a health education curriculum with specified goals. One of these goals addresses sexuality education and asks that students be able to “develop and use skills for making responsible decisions about family planning and preventing pregnancy.”¹ General condom information has been in the Montgomery County health education curriculum for roughly 30 years and school nurses have been allowed to provide condom demonstrations to individual students.² In the fall of 2002, the school board agreed to increase condom education by implementing a pilot program featuring the condom demonstration video on a trial basis in three schools. The responses at Montgomery Blair, James Hubert Blake, and Northwest high schools were positive and influenced the larger decision in November.

The same goal of “develop[ing] and us[ing] skills for making responsible decisions about family planning and preventing pregnancy” also aims to teach students about a “variety of family structures and roles of family members” and to “recognize the family as a basic unit of society that perpetuates life and promotes healthy growth and development.”³ In keeping with this goal, Montgomery County board members decided to run a pilot program in select schools during the 2005-2006 school year to include discussion of homosexuality in the eighth and tenth grade Family Life Curriculum. Since the 1970s, teachers have been allowed to address homosexuality only in response to specific questions raised by students. The expanded curriculum would eliminate this restriction and include lessons on how to reduce verbal and physical attacks against gay or bisexual teens.⁴

The vice president of the board explained this decision by saying, “historically, we’ve avoided this issue in not a very educated way. Homosexuality is part of the world we live in. There’s no moral judgment there. But we’ve been pretending it doesn’t exist, sweeping it under the rug, and it’s good we’re going to address it finally.”⁵

A number of individuals and groups, however, are not pleased with the change and have organized to fight it. A local pastor has said he is interested in suing the school board because of the inclusion of homosexuality.⁶ In addition, a website with the address RecallMontgomerySchoolBoard.com was launched as an organizing tool for those opposing the new curriculum changes. Messages, letters, and calls to action are posted on the website in protest of acceptance and public health information calling the school board members “irresponsible.”⁷ A group of parents have also organized to work against the changes. Calling themselves Citizens for Responsible Curriculum, they are working to schedule a public hearing with the school board, begin a public relations campaign, and organize a coalition of community groups that oppose the new curriculum.

Hundreds of parents have called and e-mailed the school to voice their opinions on the changes, both criticizing and favoring. For many students, however, the changes are not seen as that drastic. The school board’s sole student member said, “I think in schools it’s not really as big a deal. Everyone’s pretty much already aware of these things existing.”²

Despite the opposition, the pilot program and new changes to the curriculum will go forward. The Family Life and Human Development Advisory Committee will submit its final recommendation on the issue of addressing homosexuality sometime in the coming year.

*Maryland School Board Updates Sexuality Education Curricula
May 2004; Harford County, MD*

The Harford County Board of Education recently updated the middle school sexuality education curriculum. The curriculum had previously not been updated since 1983 and the school's Family Life Committee found that the school district lagged behind others in the area.

The Family Life Committee was commissioned to research what other counties were teaching in their middle schools and to compare it to their own school district. One Committee member said that in their interviews with 22 of the state's 24 jurisdictions, they discovered that "Harford County is the only county...that has not included information about STDs (sexually transmitted diseases)—except for HIV/AIDS—or teen pregnancy in the middle school curriculum."⁸

In their decision to update the curriculum, school administrators also considered a long list of questions that middle school students had asked in class about sexual situations, STDs, and teen pregnancy. One of the Committee members noted that instruction at the school had suffered because of the school policy, which limits discussions on topics such as STDs and teen pregnancy. Teachers had to answer students' questions in an "around-the-barn kind of manner," she said, because of these limitations.¹⁰

In February 2003, the school board voted to bring the middle school curriculum in line with other schools and approved a revised sexuality education curriculum that was originally intended to be taught in eighth grade physical education classes. In April 2004, on the advice of the school committee, the Board of Education voted to update the school's sexuality education curriculum and to start the curriculum in the seventh grade rather than in eighth grade, as originally intended. Parents may remove their children from the class if they prefer.

Maryland's Youth: Statistical Information of Note

- In 2000, Maryland's abortion rate was 38 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.³
- In 2002, Maryland's birth rate was 35 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 nationwide.⁴
- In 2003, teens ages 13-19 accounted for 4% of 1,976 total HIV cases reported.⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Maryland received \$581,857 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2004. 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 can be provided in part or in full by local groups. In Maryland, the federal funding is matched with \$436,355 in state funds.

This funding is used to run the Maryland Abstinence Education and Coordination Program (MAECP), which is administered by the Center for Maternal and Child Health. MAECP is co-sponsored by the Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy and the Office for Children, Youth, and Families. The program focuses on youth between the ages of 9 and 18 living in areas of Maryland with adolescent pregnancy rates higher than the statewide average. It consists of structured after school programs, a media campaign, and an annual conference.

Title V Evaluation

The Maryland Center for Maternal and Child Health evaluated its Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program in 2002. This evaluation process was reviewed by Advocates for Youth in its 2004 report, *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact*.⁶ AFY was forced to cite only an abstract of the full evaluation because the Center for Maternal and Child Health chose not to release the final report. From the information available, it was, however, possible to determine that participants’ pre- and post-test scores showed no significant change in attitudes or practices regarding abstinence.⁷ In addition, the proportion of youth who reported that they would remain abstinent until the completion of high school and the proportion of youth who reported abstinent behavior in the year prior to the survey both declined between pre- and post-test.⁸

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)⁹ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There is one SPRANS–CBAE grantee in Maryland; the YMCA of Cumberland County. There are two AFLA grantees: University of Maryland, Baltimore and the YMCA of Cumberland County.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore runs two abstinence-only-until-marriage programs: REACH and Project ABSTAIN. These programs are provided through the College of Medicine’s Department of Community Affairs, which partners with community organizations.

Realizing Excellence through Abstinence Education Career Exploration and Healthy Lifestyle Choices (REACH) aims to give pre-adolescent and adolescent students the skills to “practice abstinence as a peer-accepted alternative to early sexual activity.” The program is comprised of 24 two-hour sessions on peer pressure, self-esteem, decision-making, abstinence, and the consequences of early sexual activity. Students also may receive a college-age or professional mentor to help them through the program.

REACH uses an expanded version of the *Sex Can Wait* curriculum and *Baby Think it Over*, a program that uses computerized dolls to simulate teen parenthood. There is also a 12-week class for parents of children in the program in which they discuss communication, parenting styles, and physical and mental changes of adolescents.

Achieving Balance, Self-Esteem, Training, and Insight to Say No (Project ABSTAIN) has the same mission as REACH. Project Abstain focuses on youth ages 9-14 and their parents. Participants learn about peer pressure and self-esteem, and are given a mentor to help them through the program. Parents must also attend classes on parenting and communication.

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant Maryland Abstinence Education and Coordination Program www.fha.state.md.us/och/html/abstnc.html	\$581,857 federal \$436,355 state	Title V

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant		
YMCA of Cumberland County 2001-2004	\$251,228	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2005	\$172,054	AFLA
University of Maryland, Baltimore 2004-2005	\$228,924	AFLA

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Maryland Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Equality Maryland
 8121 Georgia Ave., Suite 501
 Silver Spring, MD 20901
 Phone: (301) 587-7500
www.equalitymaryland.org

MD NOW
 PO Box 7216
 Silver Spring, MD 20907
 Phone: (410) 269-0542
www.marylandnow.org

Maryland Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
 401 Westshire Rd.
 Baltimore, MD 21229
 Phone: (410) 747-3811

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
 8121 Georgia Ave., Suite 501
 Silver Spring, MD 20910
 Phone: (301) 565-4154
www.mdnaral.org

Planned Parenthood of Maryland Inc.
 330 N. Howard St.
 Baltimore, MD 21201
 Phone: (410) 576-1400
www.plannedparenthoodmd.org

Maryland Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

MD Christian Coalition
PO Box 53
Churchville, MD 21028
Phone: (410) 836-2413
www.ccmaryland.org

Maryland Family Values Alliance
www.mdfva.org

MD Right to Life
PO Box 2994
Annapolis, MD 21404
Phone: (410) 269-6397
www.mdrtl.org

TakeBackMaryland.org
PO Box 4
Pasadena, MD 21123
Phone: (410) 647-8664
www.takebackmaryland.org

Newspapers in Maryland

The Baltimore Sun
Jonathan Bor
Health & Medicine Reporter
PO Box 1377
Baltimore, MD 21278
Phone: (410) 332-6191

The Baltimore Sun
David Greene
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1627 K St. NW
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The Baltimore Sun
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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 2004 begins on October 1, 2003 and ends on September 30, 2004.

² Rebecca Dana, "Writing on the Rightness of Sex-Ed Changes," *Washington Post*, 5 December 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, 8 January 2004.

³ *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>.

⁴ *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>>.

⁵ *Maryland HIV/AIDS Epidemiological Profile* (Baltimore, MD: AIDS Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Third Quarter 2004), 4, accessed 3 February 2005, <<http://www.dhmf.state.md.us/AIDS/pdf/epiprof.pdf>>.

⁶ Debra Hauser, *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact* (Washington, D.C: Advocates for Youth, 2004), 11.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ L.K. Olsen and D. Agle, *Analysis of Four Years of Abstinence-Only Human Sexuality Programs in Maryland* [Abstract of paper presented at 130th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, 13 November 2002.]

⁹ 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).