



SIECUS

State Profile

RHODE ISLAND

*Rhode Island received no federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2008.*¹

Rhode Island Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Rhode Island schools are required to provide “accurate information and instruction” on sexuality, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Schools must also teach “the responsibilities of family membership and adulthood, including issues related to reproduction, abstinence, dating, marriage, and parenthood, as well as information about sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality and lifestyles.” These classes must stress abstinence.

In addition, the state’s department of elementary and secondary education must “establish comprehensive AIDS instruction, which shall provide students with accurate information and instruction on AIDS transmission and prevention, and which course shall also address abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred means of prevention, as a basic education program requirement.”

The commissioner of elementary and secondary education must establish a state health education curriculum for grades kindergarten through 12. This curriculum, *Rules and Regulations for School Health*, is based on the *Comprehensive Health Instructional* and the *Health Education Framework*. Schools are required to use it.

Parents must be notified of sexuality education classes and may view the curriculum by submitting a written request. Students may be removed from instruction by written notification from the parent to the principal. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Rhode Island Statute 16-1-5, 16-22-17, and 16-22-18 as well as the *Rules and Regulations for School Health*, *Comprehensive Health Instructional*, and the *Health Education Framework*.

Recent Legislation

Legislation to Require Human Development and Sexuality Education in Schools

Introduced in February 2008, House Bill 7814 would have expanded state requirements for health education to include instruction on human development and sexuality for students in grades kindergarten through 12. The bill would have required such education to be age-appropriate, medically accurate, and culturally sensitive. Among other requirements, the instruction would have also had to teach abstinence as “the only sure way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases” and provide “information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptive methods as a means to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS.” House Bill 7814 was referred to the House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare and was scheduled for a hearing in March 2008. No further action was taken and the bill died.

Rhode Island's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- In 2007, 41% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 2% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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, 7% of female high school students and 15% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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, 32% of female high school students and 35% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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, 61% of females and 71% of males in Rhode Island 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, 26% of females and 16% of males in Rhode Island 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, 15% of females and 25% of males in Rhode Island 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, 89% of high school students in Rhode Island reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 90% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

- Rhode Island was eligible for \$165,277 in federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2008.
- 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.
- Rhode Island, however, does not apply for these funds due to the extraordinary restrictions placed 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.

R H O D E I S L A N D

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

There are no CBAE or AFLA grantees in Rhode Island.

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2008

Rhode Island did not receive abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2008.

Adolescent Health Contact³

Jan Shedd
Rhode Island Department of Health
Division of Family Health
3 Capitol Hill, Room 302
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 222-2312

Rhode Island Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Rhode Island
128 Dorrance Street, Suite 220
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
www.riaclu.org

AIDS Care Ocean State
18 Parkis Avenue
Providence, RI 02907
Phone: (401) 521-3603
www.aidscaresos.org

AIDS Project of Rhode Island
232 West Exchange Street
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-5522
www.aidsprojectri.org

PFLAG of Rhode Island
500 Angell Street, Apartment #212
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 751-7571
www.pflagprovidence.org

Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island
P.O. Box 41059
Providence, RI 02940
Phone: (421) 421-7820
www.ppri.org

Rhode Island Alliance for Lesbian and Gay
Civil Rights
P.O. Box 5758, Weybosset Hill Station
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 521-GAYS

Rhode Island National Organization
for Women
P.O. Box 8413
Warwick, RI 02888
www.rinow.org

Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization
Project (CHAMP)
232 W. Exchange Street
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 427-2302
www.champnetwork.org

Rhode Island Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CareNet Rhode Island
245 Phoenix Avenue
Cranston, RI 02910
Phone: (401) 941-4357
www.carenetri.org

Rhode Island Right to Life
266 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02928
Phone: (401) 521-1860
www.rirtl.org

Newspapers in Rhode Island⁴

The Call
Newsroom
75 Main Street
Woonsocket, RI 02895
Phone: (401) 767-3000
www.woonsocketcall.com

The Newport Daily News
Newsroom
Box 402
101 Malbone Road
Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 849-3300
www.newportdailynews.com

The Providence Journal-Bulletin
Newsroom
75 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02902
Phone: (401) 277-7303
www.projo.com

The Times
Newsroom
23 Exchange Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860-2059
Phone: (401) 722-4000
www.pawtuckettimes.com

¹ This refers to the federal government's fiscal year, 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 2008 began on October 1, 2007 and ended on September 30, 2008.

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

⁴ 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](#).