



Rhode Island

Rhode Island received \$124,376 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2003.¹

Rhode Island Sexuality Education Law

Rhode Island schools are required to provide “accurate information and instruction” on sexuality, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Abstinence must be stressed as the “preferred means of protection.”

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

See Rhode Island Statute 16-22-17 and 16-22-18.

Recent Legislation

The Rhode Island legislature carried bills over from the 2003 to the 2004 session. Rhode Island’s legislative session is scheduled to end in late June 2004.

Age-Appropriate, Medically Accurate Comprehensive Sexuality Education Bills

Senate Bill 863 and House Bill 6070, both introduced in February 2003, would require that all public school students in grades one through 12 receive age-appropriate, medically accurate sexuality education. Among other provisions, the bills state that such education must stress abstinence “while not ignoring those young people who have had or are having sexual intercourse,” provide information about contraceptives, and encourage family communication.

At press time, no action had been taken on the bills.

Bill Requiring Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Introduced in January and February 2004, respectively, House Bill 7304 and Senate Bill 2316 would require that all students in grades one through 12 receive instruction in human development and sexuality.

The bills follow the guidelines in the federal Family Life Education Act (FLEA, H.R. 4182). As in FLEA, instruction must include information on family planning and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that is age-appropriate, medically accurate, culturally sensitive, and respectful of community values. Instruction must stress abstinence while also not ignoring those young

¹ 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 2003 begins on October 1, 2002 and ends on September 30, 2003.

people who have had sexual intercourse. Information on contraceptives, family communication, and negotiation skills must be included.

At press time, no action had been taken on the bills.

Events of Note

*High School Principal Pulls Story on Homosexuality from School Paper
Westerly, RI; March 2003*

A story about the gay and lesbian community at Westerly High School that included interviews with high school students who identified themselves as gay or lesbian was pulled from a second printing of the school paper. The story was published in the first printing of the school paper, which is distributed in school. However, the principal decided to pull it from the second printing, which is done in coordination with a local paper and distributed throughout the community.

The principal said, “I don’t have a problem with the content. The issues are appropriate for young people to discuss. It’s the protection of high school students I’m concerned with. I would have preferred that the names be left out, especially because it’s being distributed to the whole public.”² He encouraged the high school students to instead write an article that discusses a wider diversity of minority groups at the high school.

Despite their desire to have the story published, the high school students that work on the paper appeared to understand the decision. The student editor said, “I understand [his] reasons for withholding it. Ideally, any student paper would wish to have our say, but I understand that we’re a student paper and there has to be some higher authority.”³

Rhode Island’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁴

- In 2003, 42% of female high school students and 47% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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 8% 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 2003, 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 11% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.

² T. Ryan, “Principal Pulls Story about Gays from School Newspaper,” *The Sun Staff (Westerly, RI)*, March 14, 2003.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: J. Grunbaum, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2003,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 53, no.SS-2, May 21, 2004, pp. 1-95. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>.

- In 2003, 31% of female high school students and 31% 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 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 16% of females and 26% of males in Rhode Island reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 30% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 57% of females and 70% of males in Rhode Island reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 57% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 27% of females and 16% of males in Rhode Island reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 13% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, 3% of female high school students and 4% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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, 92% of high school students in Rhode Island reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Rhode Island's abortion rate was 23 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁵
- In 2001, Rhode Island's birth rate was 36 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 45 per 1,000 nationwide.⁶

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Rhode Island received \$124,376 in Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2003. 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 Rhode Island, the federal funding is matched with \$84,234 in state funding. The federal funding is divided between four community based organizations and is used to target male role models through a program called *Men 2B*. The state funding supports a media campaign titled *Be There For Teens* which supplements the work of *Men 2B*.

Men 2B trains men in high-risk communities to be role models. Each of the four programs involves a minimum of 40 men that attend at least 16 hours of training on topics such as

⁵ U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information, (New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, February, 2004). Available online at www.guttmacher.org.

⁶ A. Papillo, et.al., *Facts at a Glance*, (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February, 2004).

adolescent development, communication skills, boundary setting, the role of men in society and the family, and resources for youth who need help with additional problems.

The *Be There For Teens* media campaign targets men and women who are at least 20 years old. The goal is to portray a positive image of youth and stress the positive impact that adult-youth relationships can have.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE) and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees: Rhode Island currently has no SPRANS–CBAE or AFLA grantees.

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2003

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant		
Rhode Island Department of Health www.health.state.ri.us	\$124,376 federal/ \$84,234 state	Title V
Dawn for Children	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
Diocese of Providence: Project Hope/ Projecto Esperanza	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
New Visions for Newport County Inc.	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
Urban League of Rhode Island	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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 Division of Family Health
 3 Capital Hill, Room 302
 Providence, RI 02908
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Rhode Island Organization that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

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

PFLAG Providence
500 Angell St., Apt. 212
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 751-7571
www.gbwebworks.com/pflag

Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island
P.O. Box 41059
Providence, RI 02940
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
<http://members.aol.com/RIAlliance>

Rhode Island Gender Community
153 Ontario St.
Providence, RI 02907
Phone: (401) 273-0996
www.rigc.org

Rhode Island NOW
P.O. Box 8413
Warwick, RI 02888
www.rinow.org

Rhode Island Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CareNet
744 Park Ave.
Cranston, RI 02910
Phone: (401) 941-HELP
www.carenetri.org

Christian Coalition of RI
P.O. Box 6631
Central Falls, RI 02863
Phone: (401) 729-4677
www.ccofri.org

RI Right to Life
266 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 521-1860

Newspapers in Rhode Island

The Call

Kathie Raleigh
Medical/Health Editor
75 Main St.
Woonsocket, RI 02895
Phone: (401) 767-8555

The Newport Daily News

Medical/Health Editor
101 Malbone Rd.
Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 849-3300

The Providence Journal

Felice Freyer
Medical/Health Writer
75 Fountain St.
Providence, RI 02902
Phone: (401) 277-7397

The Times

Bianca Pavoncello
Medical/Health Editor
23 Exchange St.
Pawtucket, RI 02860
Phone: (401) 722-4000