



TENNESSEE

The Department of Health and community-based organizations in Tennessee received \$6,359,853 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Tennessee Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Tennessee Code forbids the teaching of any sexuality education class unless it has been approved by the state board of education and the local school board, and is taught by instructors deemed to be qualified by the local school board. Any course in sexuality education must “include presentations encouraging abstinence from sexual intercourse during the teen and pre-teen years.” Violation of this rule is considered a Class C misdemeanor.

The Code also protects sexuality education teachers:

With respect to sex education courses otherwise offered in accordance with the requirements of this subsection, no instructor shall be construed to be in violation of this section for answering in good faith any question, or series of questions, germane and material to the course, asked of the instructor and initiated by a student or students enrolled in the course.

The state code explains that if any county in Tennessee has pregnancy rates higher than 19.5 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 15–17, then every school district in that county must implement family life education in accordance with curriculum guidelines provided by the state board of education. This education must emphasize abstinence until marriage and must include instruction in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted disease (STD). Family life education must be taught for four years after the release of the initial teen pregnancy rates. If the school district fails to implement family life education, then the county must do so. If the school board does not implement family life education, the commissioner of education for the state is instructed to withhold state funding.

According to Tennessee Code, if a sexuality education program is developed in any school district, “in developing the plan, the state board shall consider such programs and materials as *Sex Respect*, *Teen-Aid*, and the *3-R Project* of the South Carolina departments of education and health.” The state also recommends a plan for curriculum development, which includes building community and parental support for family life education. Schools must hold at least one public hearing. If, upon implementation of family life education in a school district, more than 50 parents or guardians with children enrolled in the school district complain about the program, the state department of education must audit the school district “for the purpose of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the plan of family life instruction.” The state department of education must then recommend how to make the instruction more effective and how to build parental and community support for the program.

School districts may use health care professionals and social workers to assist in family life education. Such instructors must be individuals “upright of character and of good public standing.”

According to Tennessee law, HIV/AIDS-prevention courses may not be required for graduation. In addition, all instruction and materials related to HIV/AIDS prevention must place “primary emphasis on abstinence from premarital intimacy and on the avoidance of drug abuse in controlling the spread of AIDS.”

Tennessee Code allows students to be removed from sexuality education classes upon written request of their parent or guardian. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Tennessee Code Sections 49-6-1005, 49-6-1008, 49-6-1301, 49-6-1302, and 49-6-1303.

Recent Legislation

SIECUS is not aware of any proposed legislation regarding sexuality education in Tennessee.

Events of Note

No Clear Definition of Family Life Education in Tennessee

April 2007; TN

The Offices of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) in Tennessee issued a report on family life education in the state that concluded that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) need more guidance on what they should be teaching young people about preventing pregnancy and avoiding sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).²

The report, sent to the Tennessee state legislature on April 3, 2007 from John G. Morgan, comptroller of the treasury, provides an overview of family life programs in Tennessee, including curriculum content, the extent of participation in various school districts, and comparisons to programs in other states. The OREA conducted an on-line survey of all school districts; reviewed state statutes, policies, and curricula standards; and interviewed state health and education officials, sexuality educators, and abstinence-only-until-marriage providers.

Specifically, the report concluded that LEAs are required by the state to implement and develop family life education programs, but receive minimal support and guidance from state agencies. It also concluded that instructors, materials, and teaching methods vary widely from district to district and that most LEAs have been unable to determine whether or not their programs are effective.

The authors of the report recommend that the General Assembly, in cooperation with the Department of Education and State Board of Education, more clearly define the goals of family life education programs, require LEAs to use materials that are medically and scientifically accurate, and consider providing funding to augment training programs for health educators.³

Tennessee’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁴

- In 2007, 51% of female high school students and 58% of male high school students in Tennessee reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 3% of female high school students and 12% of male high school students in Tennessee reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.

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- In 2007, 11% of female high school students and 23% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 39% of female high school students and 41% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 56% of females and 66% of males in Tennessee 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, 19% of females and 15% of males in Tennessee 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, 14% of females and 25% of males in Tennessee 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 Tennessee reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 90% of high school students nationwide.

Memphis, Tennessee

- In 2007, 55% of female high school students and 72% of male high school students in Memphis, Tennessee reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 5% of female high school students and 23% of male high school students in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 14% of female high school students and 36% of male high school students in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 39% of female high school students and 49% of male high school students in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 69% of females and 79% of males in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 9% of females and 8% of males in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 8% of females and 17% of males in Memphis, Tennessee 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, 86% of high school students in Memphis, Tennessee 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 Tennessee Department of Health received \$993,367 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. In Tennessee, the full state match is provided by sub-grantees. The Tennessee Department of Health oversees this funding and awards the majority of the funding to 16 sub-grantees. The remaining portion of the funds is used for an annual conference and regional seminars.

Tennessee uses Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funds to host the annual Healthy Choices for Youth conference. The National Center for Youth Issues helps to produce this annual event which draws people from around the state. The organization describes itself as aspiring “to be the leading provider of character-building resources in America and to become a national clearinghouse of information on character development issues for children and youth.”⁵

Three of the sub-grantees are crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs): Hope Clinic for Women, Hope Resource for Women, and Women’s Care Center. Crisis pregnancy centers typically advertise as providing medical services and then use anti-abortion propaganda, misinformation, and fear and shame tactics to dissuade women facing unintended pregnancy from exercising their right to choose.

The Hope Clinic for Women’s website discusses post-abortion syndrome. The website claims “millions of women” suffer from post-abortion depression.⁶ However, there is no sound scientific evidence linking abortion to subsequent mental health problems, termed “post-abortion stress syndrome” by anti-abortion groups. Neither the American Psychological Association nor the American Psychiatric Association recognize “post-abortion stress syndrome” as a legitimate medical condition.⁷

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

There are nine CBAE grantees in Tennessee: Boys and Girls Club of Tennessee Valley, Boys to Men, Inc./Right for Me Program, Break the Cycle, Centerstone Community Health Centers, Christ Community Health Services, Hope Resource Center, Knoxville Leadership Foundation, Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, Inc., and Why kNOW Abstinence Education (receives two grants). There is one AFLA grantee: Break the Cycle.

One CBAE grantee, Boys to Men, describes its mission as, “To build youth into spiritually vital, physically well, educationally motivated, character driven, social impacting adults who do likewise for others.” One of the core principles of Boys to Men is “I can achieve all my dreams, with God and

through hard work and ignore those who try to drag me down.” The abstinence program developed by the grantee is called IW8 and targets students in grades six through nine.

Part of Boys to Men’s abstinence program is a media campaign which includes a series of billboards. One of the messages used says “#6 ‘Stay Pure.’ 1 in 4 sexually active teens gets an STD.” Another billboard reads, “#8 ‘Guard Your Heart.’ Safe sex will not protect your heart.”

Boys to Men uses *Why kNOW*, an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum, created by Why kNOW Abstinence Education, another Tennessee organization that received CBAE funding. Why kNOW Abstinence Education was established by Kris Frainie, a volunteer at AAA Women’s Services, a “Chattanooga crisis pregnancy center.”⁸ Why kNOW claims to reach 13,000 youth each year in 40 states and 11 foreign countries using an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum by the same name.⁹

SIECUS reviewed the *Why kNOW* curriculum and found that it offers limited information about important topics in human sexuality such as puberty, anatomy, and human reproduction, and no information about sexual orientation and gender identity. The information that is included is outdated, inaccurate, and misleading. In addition, *Why kNOW* relies on negative messages, distorts information, and presents biased views on gender, marriage, family structure, sexual orientation, and pregnancy options. For example, the curriculum tells students that the tradition of lifting the veil shows that “the groom [is] the only man allowed to uncover the bride,” and demonstrates “her respect for him by illustrating that she [has] not allowed any other man to lay claim to her.”¹⁰

Why kNOW includes a lesson called Speedy the Sperm©. The lesson plans instructs teachers to construct an eighteen-foot long Speedy the Sperm© out of what essentially amounts to a pillow and a piece of rope. Speedy is designed to be exactly 450 times the size of a penny, because “the HIV virus is 450 times smaller than a human sperm.”¹¹ The teacher is told to stretch Speedy© out to his full length, then hold up a penny and ask the students: “If the condom has a failure rate of 14% in preventing Speedy© from getting through to create a new life, what happens if this guy (the penny) gets through? You have a death: your own.”¹² While the curriculum does not actually state that condoms may have holes large enough for the HIV virus to travel through, this is clearly the implication behind this activity. The suggestion that condoms have large holes is a myth that continues to be used in abstinence-only-until-marriage programs to discourage their use.

Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, Inc., a crisis pregnancy center, runs the “Right Choices of West Tennessee” abstinence-only-until-marriage program.

The organization was founded on strong Christian themes. Its statement of faith reads:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and Glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential, and that this salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and not as a result of good works.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life and perform good works.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.¹³

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The abstinence-only-until-marriage sub-grantee also has an abortion statement. Part of it reads, “Since human life is sacred, the taking of a human life must only be done on the basis of a Scripturally justifiable reason. Because the Scriptures prohibit taking the life of an innocent human being, we stand morally opposed to abortion on demand.”¹⁴

Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, Inc. also offers a six-week Bible study promoting abstinence.¹⁵ In addition, the agency invited Lakita Garth to speak in area schools.¹⁶

Ms. Garth speaks to students across the country about abstinence-until-marriage. According to her website, she is “one of the country’s leading abstinence advocates.”¹⁷ Ms. Garth encourages visitors to her website to “link up” with friends who share her mission, including Club Varsity, which promotes the use of *Abstinence Til Marriage (ATM) Cards*, a type of virginity pledge.¹⁸ Research has found that under certain conditions such pledges, most commonly called virginity pledges, may help some adolescents delay sexual intercourse. When they work, pledges help this select group of adolescents delay the onset of sexual intercourse for an average of 18 months—far short of marriage. Researchers found that pledges only worked when taken by a small group of students. Pledges taken by a whole class were ineffective. More importantly, the studies also found that those young people who took a pledge were one-third less likely to use contraception when they did become sexually active than their peers who had not pledged. These teens are therefore more vulnerable to the risks of unprotected sexual activity, such as unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Further research has confirmed that although some students who take pledges delay intercourse, ultimately they are just as likely to contract an STD as their non-pledging peers. The study also found that the STD rates were higher in communities where a significant proportion (over 20 percent) of the young people had taken virginity pledges.¹⁹

In an article in *Essence Magazine*, Ms. Garth wrote of her view of sexual abstinence: “I do plan to get married, and when I do I’m going to make up for lost time. My husband will be very happy.”²⁰

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)
Tennessee Department of Health www2.state.tn.us/health/MCH/abstinenceeducation.htm	\$993,367 federal	Title V
Blount Nurses for Health Education www.ywwf.org	\$43,400	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Boys and Girls Club of Greater Knoxville	\$43,400	Title V sub-grantee
Boys to Men, Inc. “Right for Me Program” DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2008 www.boys-to-men.org	\$65,200 \$454,046	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Break the Cycle TRIPLE GRANTEE 2006–2011 TRIPLE GRANTEE 2003–2008 www.kormet.org/bkcycle	\$38,800 \$526,223 \$175,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE AFLA
Catholic Charities of Tennessee www.cctenn.org	\$121,800	Title V sub-grantee
Children and Family Services www.diane.tnstate.edu/Dircov.htm	\$38,800	Title V sub-grantee
Concerned Neighbors United	\$15,800	Title V sub-grantee
Creative Life, Inc.	\$63,000	Title V sub-grantee
Girls Scouts of Moccasin Bend Council, Inc. www.mbgsc.org	\$37,600	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Hope Clinic for Women www.hopeclinicforwomen.org	\$47,200	Title V sub-grantee
Hope Resource Center DUAL GRANTEE 2006–2011 www.hoperc.org	\$67,800 \$521,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
REACHS www.tnppca.org/hcenters	\$89,800	Title V sub-grantee
Saint Andrews AME Church	\$41,600	Title V sub-grantee
Somali Community Center of Nashville www.somalinashville.org	\$49,000	Title V sub-grantee
Warren Co. Schools and Health Services www.warrenschools.com	\$60,600	Title V sub-grantee
Women's Care Center www.rheaofofhope.org	\$42,200	Title V sub-grantee
Boys and Girls Club of Tennessee Valley 2006–2011 www.bgctnv.org	\$410,850	CBAE

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Centerstone Community Health Centers 2004–2007 www.centerstone.org	\$781,000	CBAE
Christ Community Health Services 2006–2011 www.christcommunityhealth.org	\$599,400	CBAE
Knoxville Leadership Foundation 2005–2008 www.klf.org	\$354,236	CBAE
Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, Inc. 2006–2011 www.rightchoicestn.com	\$556,402	CBAE
Why kNOW Abstinence Education 2004–2007 DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2011 www.whyknow.org	\$390,544 \$597,785	CBAE CBAE

Adolescent Health Contact²¹

Yvette Mack
Tennessee Department of Health
Maternal and Child Health Section
5th Floor, Cordell Hull Building
425 5th Ave., North
Nashville, TN 37243
Phone: (615) 741-7353

Tennessee Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Tennessee
P.O. Box 120160
Nashville, TN 37212
Phone: (615) 320-7142
www.aclu-tn.org

Knoxville Chapter of the National
Organization for Women
P.O. Box 5332
Knoxville, TN 37928
Phone: (865) 281-8075
www.knoxvillenow.org

Planned Parenthood Greater Memphis Region
1407 Union, Ste. 300
Memphis, TN 38104
Phone: (901) 725-1717
www.plannedparenthood.org/memphis

Planned Parenthood of Middle and East
Tennessee
50 Vantage Way, #102
Nashville, TN 37228
Phone: (615) 345-0952
www.plannedparenthood.org/mid-east-tennessee

Tennessee Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Center for Bio-Ethical Reform
P.O. Box 20115
Knoxville, TN 37940
Phone: (865) 609-9033
www.abortionno.org/CBRSoutheast

Tennessee Right to Life
State Central Office
P.O. Box 110765
4802 Charlotte Ave.
Nashville, TN 37209
Phone: 1-877-246-6735
www.tennesseerighttolife.org

Newspapers in Tennessee²²

Chattanooga Times Free Press
Newsroom
400 E. 11th St.
Chattanooga, TN 37403
Phone: (423) 757-6357
www.timesfreepress.com

The City Paper
Newsroom
624 Grassmere Pk., Suite 28
Nashville, TN 37211
Phone: (615) 298-9833
www.nashvillecitypaper.com

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The Memphis Daily News
Newsroom
193 Jefferson Ave.
Memphis, TN 38103
Phone: (901) 523-1561
www.memphisdailynews.com

The Jackson Sun
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1059
Jackson, TN 38302
Phone: (731) 427-3333
www.jacksonsun.com

Knoxville News Sentinel
Newsroom
2332 News Sentinel Dr.
Knoxville, TN 37921
Phone: (865) 523-3131
www.knownews.com

The Leaf Chronicle
Newsroom
200 Commerce St.
Clarksville, TN 37040
Phone: (931) 552-1808
www.theleafchronicle.com

The Tennessean
Newsroom
1100 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37203
Phone: (615) 259-8000
www.tennessean.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 *Family Life Education in Tennessee* (Tennessee: Offices of Research and Education Accountability, 2007).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: Danice K. Eaton, et al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005," *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 55, no. SS-5 (9 June 2006): 1-108, accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>>.

⁵ "Our Vision," The National Center for Youth Issues, accessed 5 April 2008, <<http://www.ncyi.org/www/docs/104/ncyi-vision>>.

⁶ "Post-abortion and Pregnancy Loss," Hope Clinic for Women, accessed 14 July 2008, <http://www.hopeclinicforwomen.org/postabortion.php>.

⁷ Susan Cohen, "Abortion and Mental Health: Myths and Realities," *Guttmacher Policy Review* vol. 9, no. 3 (Summer 2006), accessed 30 January 2007, <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/09/3/gpr090308.html>>.

⁸ "About Why kNOW: What Why kNOW Does," Why kNOW Abstinence Education Programs, (29 August 2007), accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://whyknow.org/www/docs/115/why-know-abstinence-teens.html>>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Kris Frainie, *Why kNOW Abstinence Education Program Teacher's Manual*, (Chattanooga, TN: Why kNOW Abstinence Education Programs, A Division of AAA Women's Services, 2002). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Why kNOW* at <<http://www.communityactionkit.org/reviews/WhyKnow.html>>.

¹¹ Why kNOW, 8th grade and high school, p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Statement of Faith," Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, accessed 14 July 2008, <<http://www.lifechoicesdyersburg.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/statementoffaith.doc>>.

¹⁴ "Policy Statement On Abortion," Life Choices Pregnancy Support Center, accessed 14 July 2008, <<http://www.lifechoicesdyersburg.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/policystatementonabortion.doc>>.

¹⁵ "Programs and Newsletters," Life Support Pregnancy Support Center, accessed 14 July 2008, <<http://www.lifechoicesdyersburg.com/id2.html>>.

¹⁶ "Home" Right Choices of West Tennessee, accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://www.rightchoicestn.com/default.htm>>.

¹⁷ "Biography," Lakita, (2006), accessed 21 March 2008 <<http://www.lakitagarth.com/index2.html>>.

¹⁸ “Catalog: Abstinence ‘Til Marriage (ATM) Pledge Cards,” Club Varsity, (2001-2003), accessed 21 March 2008, <<http://www.clubvarsity.org/goldcard.shtml>>.

¹⁹ Peter Bearman and Hannah Brückner “Promising the Future: Virginity Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse.” *American Journal of Sociology* 106.4 (2001): 859-912.; Peter Bearman and Hannah Brückner, “After the promise: The STD consequences of adolescent virginity pledges,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36.4 (2005): 271-278.

²⁰ L. Garth, “Not Until My Wedding Night,” *Essence*, December 2003, 187-188.

²¹ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

²² 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.