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State Profile

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The Department of Health and community-based organizations in Washington received \$2,499,202 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Washington Sexuality Education Law and Policy

School districts in Washington are not required to implement comprehensive sexuality education; the decision to implement sex education or human sexuality instruction in schools is made by the local school board. When creating sex education or human sexuality instruction, Washington law states that school districts must involve parents and other community members “in the planning, development, evaluation, and revision.” The law also requires every Washington public school that offers sexual health education to assure that instruction is medically and scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, appropriate for students regardless of race, gender, disability status, or sexual orientation, and includes information about abstinence and other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy. It also states, “Abstinence may not be taught at the exclusion of other materials and instruction on contraceptives and disease prevention.”

Schools are required to teach sexually transmitted disease prevention. Schools are also required to teach HIV/AIDS-prevention education and emphasize abstinence as a prevention method. This instruction must be given at least once each school year beginning in the fifth grade and must “teach that condoms and other artificial means of birth control are not a certain means of preventing the spread of the AIDS virus and reliance on condoms puts a person at risk for exposure to the disease.” Information must be current and medically accurate. In order to verify medical accuracy, the Office on HIV/AIDS within the Washington State Department of Health must review and approve all HIV curricula and supporting materials.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health developed voluntary guidelines titled the *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*. These guidelines promote broad, comprehensive, positive sexuality education programs that provide information about both abstinence and contraception, and are consistent with characteristics of programs that have been rigorously evaluated using quantitative research and have shown to be effective in reducing risk-taking behaviors. Washington also provides a voluntary curriculum, *KNOW HIV/STD Prevention Curriculum*, for use in grades five through 12.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from HIV/AIDS-prevention education if they have attended one information session about the HIV/AIDS curriculum and presentation. If a school district chooses to provide sexuality education, parents may also remove their children from the class with written notification. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Revised Code of Washington Section 28A.230.020, 28A.230.070, 392-410-140, *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*, and *KNOW HIV/STD Prevention Curriculum*.

Recent Legislation

Bill to Change Language Surrounding Abstinence-Only Funding

Senate Bill 6305, introduced in January 2008, would change the language of the current law, so that the original text stating “the department of health *shall* maximize federal funding by timely application for federal funds available under P.L. 104-193 and Title V” would instead read “the department of health *may* maximize federal funding by timely application for federal funds available under P.L. 104-193 and Title V.” The bill passed the Senate on February 18, 2008 and was sent to the House but later died.

Events of Note

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

Washington’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note

Washington did not participate in the 2007 Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance Survey.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

The Washington State Department of Health received \$814,633 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. As of 2003, all state matching funds were cut; the state match is now completely provided through in-kind support from the state’s media partner.

In 2007, the Washington Department of Health used Title V funds to launch a statewide public awareness campaign about abstinence targeting young people ages 10–14 and their parents. The campaign’s goal is to reduce the number of unintended teen pregnancies through abstinence-based media messages that communicate the importance of healthy relationships, model good decision-making skills, and encourage effective parent-teen communication. The campaign includes a website (www.nosexnoproblems.com), as well as billboards, radio and television ads, and pre-movie spots.

One public service announcement shows two female students passing notes in a high school classroom. The first comments in her note, “That new guy is SO HOT!! I’m thinking about doing it with him!!!”² Her friend responds, “NO WAY! I heard he has HERPES!!!” The first student is shocked and responds loudly, “WHAT?” A health fact regarding Washington youth follows this interaction and the announcer says, “Don’t be a statistic!”

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

There are three CBAE grantees in Washington: AWARE, Inc., Clarkston School District, and Teen-Aid. There are no AFLA grantees in Washington.

AWARE, Inc. has produced several commercials with the abstinence-only-until-marriage message. One commercial, “HPV,” features a young woman and man and states, “HPV can be deadly. . .but the good news is there is one thing that you can wear that has been proven effective in preventing the spread of HPV. They’re called ‘pants.’”³

AWARE, Inc. also sells “Abstinence Til Marriage (ATM)” cards on its website. This novelty item, made to look like bank card, is meant to serve as a reminder of one’s virginity pledge. Under expiration date, the cards read “Wedding Day.”⁴ Research has found that under certain conditions virginity pledges

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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. 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 equally as likely to contract an STD as their non-pledging peers. The study also found that STD rates were higher in communities where a significant proportion (over 20 percent) of the young people had taken virginity pledges.⁵

Teen-Aid, another CBAE grantee, says that it “uses multi-media and personal experiences” in its abstinence-only-until-marriage programming for parents and teens.⁶ Teen-Aid claims to have reached 9,000 teens and parents in eastern Washington in one year.⁷ Teen-Aid has produced several curricula including *Me, My World, My Future* and *Sexuality, Commitment & Family*.⁸ SIECUS reviewed these curricula and found that they rely on fear and shame, include inaccurate and exaggerated information about condom failure, and contain biased messages about gender, sexual orientation, family structure, and pregnancy options. For example, in one lesson in *Sexuality, Commitment & Family*, students write an essay titled “If Wombs Had Windows,” in which they speculate how individuals and society might behave differently if “we could see the unborn child developing in the womb.” In the condom lesson from *Me, My World, My Future*, teachers compare using a condom to playing Russian roulette.⁹

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)
Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov www.nosexnoproblems.com	\$814,663 federal	Title V
AWARE, Inc. 2005–2008 www.awareprogram.net	\$130,925	CBAE
Clarkson School District 2005–2008	\$753,614	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)
Teen-Aid, Inc. 2004–2007 www.teen-aid.org	\$800,000	CBAE

Adolescent Health Contact¹⁰

Marla Russo, MPH
 Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator
 Washington State Department of Health
 P.O. Box 47880
 Olympia, WA 98501
 Phone: (360) 236-3515

Washington Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Washington
 705 2nd Ave., 3rd Floor
 Seattle, WA 98104
 Phone: (206) 624-2184
www.aclu-wa.org

League of Women Voters of Washington
 4710 University Way NE, Suite 214
 Seattle, WA 98105
 Phone: (206) 622-8961
www.lwvwa.org

Lifelong AIDS Alliance
 1002 East Seneca
 Seattle, WA 98122
 Phone: (206) 328-8979
www.lifelongaidsalliance.org

NARAL Pro-Choice Washington
 811 1st Ave., Suite 456
 Seattle, WA 98104
 Phone: (206) 624-1990
www.prochoicewashington.org

Planned Parenthood of Western Washington
 2001 East Madison
 Seattle, WA 98122
 Phone: (206) 328-7734
www.plannedparenthood.org/westernwashington

Religious Coalition for Reproductive
 Choice of Washington
 P.O. Box 30782
 Seattle, WA 98113
 Phone: (206) 260-7905

Washington Education Association
 P.O. Box 9100
 Federal Way, WA 98063
 Phone: (253) 941-6700
www.washingtonea.org

Washington State Medical Association
 2033 6th Ave., Suite 1100
 Seattle, WA 98121
 Phone: (206) 441-9762
www.wsma.org

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Washington State Parent-Teacher
Association
2003 65th Ave., W
Tacoma, WA 98466
Phone: (253) 565-2153
www.wastatepta.org

Washington Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Human Life of Washington
14400 Bel-Red Rd., #207
Bellevue, WA 98007
Phone: (425) 641-9345
www.humanlife.net

Newspapers in Washington¹¹

Bellingham Herald
Newsroom
1155 N. State St.
Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: (360) 715-2260
www.bellinghamherald.com

The News Tribune
Newsroom
P.O. Box 11000
Tacoma, WA 98411
Phone: (253) 597-8686
www.thenewstribune.com

Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1909
Seattle, WA 98111
Phone: (206) 448-8000
www.seattlepi.com

Seattle Times
Newsroom
P.O. Box 70
Seattle, WA 98111
Phone: (206) 464-2200
www.seattletimes.com

Spokesman-Review
Newsroom
P.O. Box 2160
Spokane, WA 99210
Phone: (509) 459-5000
www.spokesmanreview.com

Tacoma Daily Index
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1303
Tacoma, WA 98401
Phone: (253) 627-4853
www.tacomadailyindex.com

The Columbian
Newsroom
P.O. Box 180
Vancouver, WA
(360)699-6006
www.columbian.com

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

² “Washington State Abstinence PSA,” Washington State Department of Health, accessed 31 March 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSDI_gNElhUQ&feature=related>.

³ “Teens: View Our Commercials: HPV,” AWARE, (2006), accessed 18 March 2008, <http://www.awareprogram.net/index.php?aw1=teens_singles>.

⁴ “ATM: Abstinence Til Marriage,” AWARE, (2006), accessed 18 March 2008, <<http://www.awareprogram.net/index.php?aw1=atm>>.

⁵ 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.

⁶ “About Teen-Aid,” Teen-Aid, accessed 18 March 2008, <http://www.teen-aid.org/About_Teen-Aid.htm>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Abstinence Education: Curricula,” Teen-Aid, accessed 18 March 2008, <http://www.teen-aid.org/Abstinence_Education/Curricula_Scope_and_Sequence.htm>.

⁹ Steve Potter and Nancy Roach, *Sexuality, Commitment & Family* (Spokane, WA: Teen-Aid, 1990, HIV chapter revised 1998); Nancy Roach and LeAnna Benn, *Me, My World, My Future* (Spokane WA: Teen-Aid, 1993 HIV chapter revised 1998). For more information see, *Toward a Sexually Healthy America, Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs that Try to Keep Our Youth Scared Chaste* at <http://www.siecus.org/pubs/tsha_scaredchaste.pdf>.

¹⁰ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹¹ 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](#).