



SIECUS

State Profile

ARKANSAS

The Department of Health and community-based organizations in Arkansas received \$3,372,232 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Arkansas Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Arkansas law does not require schools to teach sexuality education or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. If a school offers sexuality or STD/HIV education, it must stress abstinence.

Arkansas maintains curriculum standards for physical and health education; however, these do not include specific guidelines pertaining to the content of sexuality education courses. According to the Department of Education, course content is left to the discretion of the local school districts and varies widely from school to school. There is also no system of evaluation to monitor the subject matter covered in health education classes across the state.

School-based health clinics may teach sexuality education and may also prescribe and distribute contraceptives with written parental consent; however, no state funds may be used to purchase condoms or contraceptives. These school-based health clinics must maintain records of the number of condoms and other contraceptive devices distributed and prescribed, as well as the number of pregnancies and STDs in the school. This information must remain confidential. Clinics may not give information about abortions or refer students to where they might find such information.

Arkansas does not require parental permission for students to participate in sexuality or HIV/AIDS education nor does it say whether parents or guardians may remove their children from such classes.

See Arkansas Code 6-18-703.

Recent Legislation

Legislation Requires Emergency Contraception Information and Availability in the ER

Senate Bill 847, introduced in March 2007, requires that all health care facilities in the state that are licensed to provide emergency care to sexual assault victims promptly inform the victim about the availability of emergency contraception (EC). Facilities must educate the victim on the proper use of EC and any necessary follow-up care. SB 847 passed both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by on April 9, 2007 Governor Mike Beebe, becoming Act 1576.

Bill Creates an HIV/AIDS Minority Taskforce

House Bill 2615, introduced in March 2007, creates the Arkansas HIV/AIDS Minority Taskforce. The Taskforce will coordinate statewide efforts to combat the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on women, African Americans, Hispanics, and other minority populations. HB 2615 passed both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by Governor Mike Beebe on April 3, 2007.

Bill Appropriates \$1.5 Million for Abstinence Education

Senate Bill 589, introduced in February 2007, appropriates \$1.5 million for grants and assistance for the Department of Health’s “Abstinence Education and Unwed Birth and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program.” This bill was passed in Senate and the House, and became Act 1563 on April 9, 2007.

Events of Note

Book about Sexuality Allowed to Remain on Shelves

March 2005; Fayetteville, AR

After the materials evaluation committee of the school board ruled against complaints issued by a concerned parent, the Fayetteville school district decided to keep Robie Harris’ book *It’s Perfectly Normal* on library shelves.

During a school board meeting in late February 2005, a parent of a McNair Middle School student voiced complaints about three books—*The Teenage Guy’s Survival Guide*, by Jeremy Daldry, and *It’s So Amazing* and *It’s Perfectly Normal*, both by Robie Harris—available in the school district’s libraries. The parent suggested that they be removed from the collection. Interestingly, *It’s Perfectly Normal* was not available in her child’s library as it had been lost; however, the parent stated that she learned of the book from “Point of View,” a Christian radio show, and later found out that it was available elsewhere in the school district. She felt the illustrations were too sexually explicit and that the book encouraged children to experiment with “both heterosexuality and homosexuality.”²

As a result of her complaint, the school district created a seven-member committee to review *It’s Perfectly Normal*. Each committee member received a copy of the book to review, in effect forcing the school to order six additional copies. The committee decided the book should be allowed to remain in general circulation in junior high libraries (though currently there are no copies available) and will be available in parent libraries in middle schools and elementary schools. In middle schools, a student may check out the book only with the approval of both an educator and a counselor or administrator.

Arkansas’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note³

- In 2007, 55% of female high school students and 55% of male high school students in Arkansas reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 6% of female high school students and 13% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 16% of female high school students and 22% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 43% of female high school students and 37% of male high school students in Arkansas 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, 55% of females and 64% of males in Arkansas 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, 25% of females and 14% of males in Arkansas 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, 17% of females and 25% of males in Arkansas 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 Arkansas 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 Arkansas Department of Health received \$587,519 in federal Title V 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. Arkansas uses both state funds and sub-grantees to provide the match. The Arkansas Department of Health has authority over the “Arkansas Abstinence Education Program.”

In the state, abstinence-only-until-marriage funds are disbursed through a grant application process and monitored by the Governor’s Steering Committee on Abstinence Education. This group was established by former Governor Mike Huckabee and is currently chaired by Martha Adcock of the Family Council in Little Rock, Arkansas.⁴ This organization is an affiliate of Focus on the Family.⁵

In Fiscal Year 2007, the Arkansas Abstinence Education Program distributed Title V funds to ten sub-grantees including: Abstinence By Choice, Inc., CALEB Initiative, Inc./Greater Fellowship Ministries, Earle School District, Excel Upward, Healthy Kids, Inc., Lee County Family Resource Center, Prim-N-Proper/Choosing to EXCEL, Reality Check, Inc., Stuttgart Public School, and Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. The sub-grantees use a variety of curricula including *A.C. Green’s Game Plan*, *Baby Think it Over*, *Choosing the Best*, *Heritage Keepers*, *Sex Respect*, and *Worth the Wait*.

SIECUS reviewed several of these curricula. In our review of *Game Plan* we found that in order to convince high school students to remain abstinent until marriage, the curriculum relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage, sexual orientation, and family structure. In addition, *Game Plan* fails to provide important information on sexual health including how students can seek testing and treatment if they suspect they may have an STD. Finally, the format and underlying biases of the curriculum do not allow for cultural, community, and individual values, and discourage critical thinking and discussions of alternate points of view in the classroom. For example, *Game Plan* states that, “Even if you’ve been sexually active, it’s never too late to say no. You can’t go back, but you can go forward. You might feel guilty or untrustworthy, but you can start over again.”

SIECUS reviewed *Heritage Keepers*, *Abstinence Education I* and found that it contains very little information about important topics in human sexuality such as puberty, anatomy, and sexual

behavior. Even topics that are frequently discussed in detail in other abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, such as condoms and STDs, receive very little mention. Instead, the curriculum devotes most of its lessons to the importance of marriage and abstinence before marriage. It relies on messages of fear and shame and promotes biased views of gender, marriage, and pregnancy options. For example, the curriculum tells students “Males are more sight orientated whereas females are more touch orientated. This is why girls need to be careful with what they wear, because males are looking! The girl might be thinking fashion, while the boy is thinking sex. For this reason, girls have a responsibility to wear modest clothing that doesn’t invite lustful thoughts.”

Sex Respect, one of the first commercially available abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum, is also used in Arkansas. SIECUS reviewed the most recent edition of *Sex Respect* and found that the curriculum relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage, sexual orientation, and family structure. According to *Sex Respect*, “there is no way to have premarital sex without hurting someone.” *Sex Respect* implies that young people who become sexually active lack values, self-esteem, and principles: “Many young teens who have been brought up with principles and values may have already decided they want to save sex for marriage.” The curriculum is also not appropriate for public schools, as it remains patently religious. For example, *Sex Respect* uses Biblical language in giving young people dating advice: “Set ending time for your date before you go out. Be home on time. Don’t invite your date in. Lead yourselves not into temptation.”

SIECUS also reviewed *Worth the Wait*. We found that it covers some important topics related to sexuality such as puberty, anatomy, and sexual abuse, and that the curriculum is based on reliable sources of data. Despite these strengths, *Worth the Wait* relies on messages of fear, discourages contraceptive use, and promotes biased views of gender, marriage, and pregnancy options. For example, the curriculum explains, “teenage sexual activity can create a multitude of medical, legal, and economic problems not only for the individuals having sex but for society as a whole.”

Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. is a faith-based organization that, according to its website, works under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁶ The organization uses the *Choosing the Best* curricula. (See the CBAE and AFLA section for more information on the *Choosing the Best* series.) In addition to the problems found in these curricula, the organization’s website contains numerous medical inaccuracies. For example, the website explains, “the best way to diagnose Chlamydia is through a blood test.”⁷ Chlamydia cannot be diagnosed through a blood test, but can only be detected through a urine test or a swab of the inside of the urethra for men or of the urethra or cervix for women. The website includes other inaccuracies such as “AIDS is the result of HPV.”⁸ In fact, HPV, human papillomavirus, can cause genital warts or cervical cancer. HIV, human immunodeficiency virus, leads to AIDS.

The “What about safe sex?” section of the organization’s website also includes misinformation. For example, it says “Youth and adults alike have been given the false impression that a condom can protect one from disease and unwanted pregnancy.....Did you know that the Center for Disease Control is now telling physicians to wear two latex gloves when examining patients? The thickness of two gloves is 11 times that of a condom. How can we then expect a condom to protect us from anything?”⁹ In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing transmission of HIV and can significantly reduce the transmission of other STDs.¹⁰ Moreover, research shows that when used consistently and correctly, condoms are 98 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.¹¹

Stuttgart Public Schools, a Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage sub-grantee, uses the Aim for Success speaker series.¹² Based in Dallas, Texas, Aim for Success sends abstinence-only-until-marriage speakers into schools. The website for the program describes the key components including, “Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A description of the leading STDs many of which are

incurable and can lead to infertility, reoccurring sores, cancer, and death.” In addition, Aim for Success instructs youth on, “Failure Rate of Contraceptives: Pregnancy, STDs, and emotional scars can occur even with a condom.”¹³ Research shows fear and shame tactics are not effective in changing youth behavior.

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

There are five CBAE grantees in Arkansas: CALEB Initiative/Greater Fellowship Ministries, Earle School District Abstinence Education Program, Fayetteville Public Schools, Reality Check, Inc., and Tree of Life Prevention Health Maintenance. There is one AFLA grantee in Arkansas: Health Connections.

The CALEB Initiative abstinence-only-until-marriage program is operated through Greater Fellowship Ministries. According to the program’s director, the CALEB Initiative serves Jefferson County and Arkansas County, and specifically serves the Watson Chapel School District. The program consists of an in-school abstinence-only-until-marriage program two times a week, an after-school abstinence-only-until-marriage and homework help program, and an on-going abstinence-only-until-marriage program in the juvenile detention system that meets one to two times per month. In addition, the CALEB Initiative sponsors a summer camp program and reaches about 2,100 students per year.¹⁴

CALEB Initiative uses the *Choosing the Best* series.¹⁵ SIECUS reviewed two of the curricula produced by Choosing the Best, Inc.—*Choosing the Best LIFE* (for high school students) and *Choosing the Best PATH* (for middle school students). These reviews found that the curricula name numerous negative consequences of premarital sexuality activity and suggest that teens should feel guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed of sexual behavior. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states that, “Relationships often lower the self-respect of both partners—one feeling used the other feeling like the user. Emotional pain can cause a downward spiral leading to intense feelings of lack of worthlessness.” *Choosing the Best PATH* says, “Sexual activity also can lead to the trashing of a person’s reputation, resulting in the loss of friends.”¹⁶

Reality Check, Inc. is an abstinence-only-until-marriage program that operates in schools, reaching students from 6th to 12th grade.¹⁷ This organization serves as an abstinence-only-until-marriage provider and also as the abstinence program of Tree of Life Preventive Health Maintenance. Tree of Life receives Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage and CBAE grants.¹⁸ The organization identifies itself as “a Christian organization that promotes healthy living,” and runs several programs in addition to Reality Check, Inc.¹⁹ (For more information on Tree of Life, see the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage section).

The Reality Check, Inc. organization presents misinformation on its website. Under the section “Programs,” Reality Check, Inc. states that condoms “are not particularly effective when used to prevent pregnancy,” “scientific evidence shows that condoms may not prevent the transmission of most STDs,” and “almost no risk reduction is provided for HPV infection.”²⁰ However, when used consistently and correctly, condoms are 98 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.²¹ In addition, according to the CDC, condoms can help protect sexually active individuals from a number of STDs, including HPV.²²

Reality Check, Inc. also produces television commercials featuring its staff members who conduct abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in schools. One of the staff members tells students “Don’t cheapen yourself, you’re worth more than you think,” and “your emotions don’t last, Your future does.”²³

In addition, the Reality Check, Inc. sub-grantee also uses the services of the speaker Keith Deltano.²⁴ Mr. Deltano is an abstinence-only-until-marriage speaker and Christian comedian who has given talks around the country in middle schools and high schools. SIECUS attended one of Mr. Deltano’s most popular presentations, “The New Sexual Revolution or Abstinence is Cool,” and found that he uses a loud, aggressive style, reminiscent of a football coach to badger students into accepting his abstinence-only-until-marriage ideology. Deltano relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage and gender. The highlight of Deltano’s performance includes

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an activity designed to illustrate the ineffectiveness of condoms against HIV in which he suggests that condoms fail 10% of the time and then he dangles a cinderblock over the genitals of an unsuspecting male student yelling, “Is 10 percent good enough for you?!?! Is it good enough?!?!”

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)
Arkansas Department of Health www.healthylarkansas.com	\$587,519 federal \$440,639 state	Title V
Abstinence By Choice, Inc.	\$102,932	Title V sub-grantee
CALEB Initiative/Greater Fellowship Ministries DUAL GRANTEE 2006–2011	\$115,806 \$350,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Earle School District – Abstinence Education Program DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2011 www.earle.crsc.k12.ar.us	\$65,825 \$300,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Excel Upward – Empowerment Through Abstinence	\$70,652.14	Title V sub-grantee
Healthy Kids, Inc.	\$101,499	Title V sub-grantee
Lee County Family Resource Center	\$33,750.80	Title V sub-grantee
Prim N Proper, Inc. / Choosing to EXCEL	\$82,514.05	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)
Reality Check, Inc. DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2011 www.realitycheckinc.org	\$90,415.22 \$532,509	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Stuttgart Public School	\$76,741.13	Title V sub-grantee
Tree of Life Prevention Health Maintenance DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2008 www.whatsmyreality.com	\$66,000 \$726,164	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Fayetteville Public Schools 2004–2007 www.fayar.net	\$447,099	CBAE
Healthy Connections 2007–2011	\$428,941	AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact²⁵

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Arkansas Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Arkansas
904 West 2nd St.
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 374-2660
www.acluarkansas.org

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

Arkansas Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Family Council of Arkansas
414 South Pulaski St., Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 375-7000
www.familycouncil.org

Newspapers in Arkansas²⁶

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Newsroom
P.O. Box 2221
Little Rock, AR 72203
Phone: (501) 378-3568
www2.arkansasonline.com

Jonesboro Sun
NEWSroom
518 Carson St.
Jonesboro, AR 72401
Phone: (870) 935-5525
www.jonesborosun.com

The Morning News
Newsroom
2560 N. Lowell Rd.
Springdale, AR 72764
Phone: (479) 872-5036
www.nwaonline.net

The Sentinel-Record
Newsroom
300 Spring St.
Hot Springs National Park, AR 71901
Phone: (501) 623-7711
www.hotsr.com

Times Record
Newsroom
3600 Wheeler Ave.
Fort Smith, AR 72901
Phone: (479) 785-7748
www.swtimes.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 B. Bennett, "Committee: Book is Perfectly Normal," *Northwest Arkansas' News Source*, 10 March 2005, accessed 18 March 2005, <<http://www.nwanews.com/story.php?paper=nwat§ion=News&storyid=26042>>.

³ 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>.

- ⁴ David Hammer, "Rights Groups Seeks Reviews of Abstinence Programs," *Associated Press*, 22 September 2005, accessed 17 March 2008, <<http://www.aegis.com/news/ads/2005/AD051905.html>>.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ "Arkansas Communities," Tree of Life—Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc., accessed 17 March 2008, <<http://arkansascommunities.com/Fort%20Smith/treeoflife.htm>>.
- ⁷ "Chlamydia," Tree of Life—Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc., accessed 17 March 2008 <<http://arkansascommunities.com/LittleRock/viewproduct.asp?item=b574c>>.
- ⁸ "Arkansas Communities," Tree of Life—Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc.
- ⁹ "What About Safe Sex?," Tree of Life—Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc., accessed 17 March 2008, <<http://www.arkansascommunities.com/LittleRock/viewproduct.asp?item=h555o>>.
- ¹⁰ *Latex Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases—Prevention Messages*, (Atlanta, GA: National Center for HIV, STD & TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), undated document.
- ¹¹ Robert Hatcher, et al., *Contraceptive Technology*, 17th rev. ed. (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1998): 328-329; "Condoms Get Better," *Consumer Reports*, June 1999, 46.
- ¹² "School List," Aim for Success, (2005-2006), accessed 17 March 2008 <<http://www.aimforsuccess.org/prevpres.asp>>.
- ¹³ "Programs," Aim for Success, accessed 17 March 2008 <<http://www.aimforsuccess.org/programinfo.asp#StudentPres>>.
- ¹⁴ Personal communication between Meghan Rapp and Esau Watson, 1 April 2008.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000); Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best PATH* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000). For more information, see SIECUS' reviews of *Choosing the Best LIFE* and *Choosing the Best PATH* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.
- ¹⁷ "Reality Check," MySpace, accessed 4 March 2008, <<http://www.myspace.com/whatsmyreality>>.
- ¹⁸ Mark Minton, "Federal Funding Fuels Faith-Based Push For Chastity," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 29 October 2006, accessed 4 March 2008, <<http://www.nwanews.com/adg/News/171060/>>.
- ¹⁹ "About Tree of Life," Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc., accessed 12 March 2008, <<http://www.treeoflifehealth.org/tolsite.swf>>.
- ²⁰ "Programs: STDs," Reality Check! Abstinence Education, accessed 12 March 2008, <<http://www.whatsmyreality.com>>.
- ²¹ J. Trussel, et al., "Contraceptive Failure in the United States: An Update," *Studies in Family Planning*, January/February 1990, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 52.
- ²² *Latex Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases—Prevention Messages*.
- ²³ "Commercial Two," Reality Check! Abstinence Education, accessed 1 April 2008, <<http://www.whatsmyreality.com>>.
- ²⁴ "Reality Check Abstinence Education," Reality Check, Inc., accessed 6 May 2008, <<http://www.whatsmyreality.com/>>.
- ²⁵ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.
- ²⁶ 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](#).