



SIECUS

State Profile

ARKANSAS

The Department of Health and community-based organizations in Arkansas received \$4,030,124 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2008.¹

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

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

Arkansas's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- 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.

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- 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

- Arkansas received \$587,519 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.
- In Arkansas, the match is provided through a combination of in-kind funds and state funds.
- The Arkansas Department of Health runs the “Arkansas Abstinence Education Program” and disburses the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding to sub-grantees through a grant application process.
- There are 13 Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage sub-grantees in the state: one is a county resource center, two are public school districts, and 11 are community-based organizations (including one faith-based).
- The sub-grantee process is monitored by the governor’s Steering Committee on Abstinence Education which was established by former Governor Mike Huckabee (R) and is currently chaired by Martha Adcock of the Family Council in Little Rock. The Family Council is an affiliate of Focus on the Family, a Christian ministry whose mission is “to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible by nurturing and defending the God-ordained institution of the family and promoting biblical truths worldwide.”³

SIECUS has compiled some examples of the use of federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Arkansas:

Reality Check, Inc., \$25,000 (2008) and \$600,000 (CBAE 2007–2012)

Reality Check, Inc. is a community-based organization that provides abstinence-only-until-marriage programs to middle school, high school, and college students. The organization serves at least 30 schools and offers programs in both English and Spanish. Among its programs, Reality Check, Inc. offers a “Power of Purity” seminar for college students at the College of the Ozarks and has developed a program in Spanish for Latino youth called “*Constuyendo Nuestra Vida Para el Futuro*” (“Building Our Lives for the Future”). The mission of the organization is “to reach youth with scientifically accurate medical information that is helping restore value to every aspect of their lives; physically, emotionally, sexually, and educationally.”⁴

Reality Check, Inc. uses the *Choosing the Best* series which is one of the more popular abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the country. The series is comprised of a number of curricula for students from sixth grade through high school: *Choosing the Best WAY*, *Choosing the Best PATH*, *Choosing the Best LIFE*, *Choosing the Best JOURNEY*, and *Choosing the Best SOULMATE*. The series has been recently revised and the information about STDs is now medically accurate. However, *Choosing the Best* curricula continue to promote heterosexual marriage, rely on messages of fear and shame, and include biases about gender, sexual orientation, and pregnancy options. For example, *Choosing the Best PATH* asks students to brainstorm the “emotional consequences” of premarital sex. Suggested answers include “guilt, feeling scared, ruined relationships, broken emotional bonds.”⁵

The organization’s message focuses on the negative consequences of pre-marital sex. In a section of its website titled, “13 Dimensions of Abstinence,” it states, “Abstinence is about freedom. Freedom from disease, from emotional hurt, from worry, from distrust and suspicion... Freedom from placing yourself as a burden to others – your family, your community, your society. Freedom from having to make a choice about terminating a pregnancy, aborting a baby, ending its life so that yours can continue with less burden.”⁶ While it is encouraging that Reality Check, Inc. is attempting to look at abstinence from a positive perspective, the implication of messages like this is that young people who engage in premarital sex are a burden to others and should be looked at with distrust and suspicion.

Tree of Life Preventive Health Maintenance, Inc., \$42,912 (2008), \$512,500 (CBAE 2005–2008), and \$512,500 (CBAE 2008–2013)

Tree of Life Preventive Health Maintenance, Inc. is a Christian organization that provides social services in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The organization is a dual grantee, receiving funding from both the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage and CBAE funding streams. Among its programs, the organization operates Hannah House, “an interdenominational Christian home” for pregnant young women that exists to help young women “...heal and become productive, caring individuals who are able to care for their babies, or to help them in making a decision to place their baby for adoption.” The organization’s website explains that, “the program will offer a Christian alternative to abortion by providing food, shelter, education, and assistance in obtaining medical care for the young woman during her pregnancy.”⁷ Hannah House offers classes on abstinence-until-marriage, childbirth and parenting, Bible study, “Training in Godly Living,” and counseling on adoption and “post-abortion trauma.”⁸

Tree of Life also operates the “Reality Check!” abstinence program that serves schools in four counties.⁹ The Reality Check! website features information from national organizations and researchers who promote abstinence-only-until-marriage programming. The site’s homepage features an explanation of the “twelve dimensions of abstinence” by Dr. Stan Weed, research director and co-founder of the Institute for Research and Evaluation. Weed explains, “Abstinence is

about not rationalizing. It is about rejecting the excuses of having unmarried sex which really does not excuse the behavior. Excuses such as, “I’m in love,” “I practice safer sex”...STD pathogens will not hear these rationalizations. They will not care if you are in love.”¹⁰

Stan Weed was the only witness at the April 2008 Committee on Oversight and Government Reform hearing to investigate the effectiveness of federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs who defended the government’s investment in those programs. By his own account, Weed has spent more than 20 years working on these issues, interviewed more than 500,000 teens, and studied more than 100 abstinence-only programs. Yet, Weed has only one published study in a peer-reviewed journal showing that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs can have any impact on sexual behavior.¹¹ (The program studied showed a modest impact in helping seventh graders delay sex.) Despite Weed’s insistence that abstinence-only-until-marriage funding continue, he admitted that they have not, up to this point, “done abstinence well” and repeatedly backed away from the legislatively mandated abstinence-only-until-marriage approach. Instead, he preferred the term “abstinence-centered.”

The Reality Check website also provides youth and parents with misleading and inaccurate information on the effectiveness of condom use. Under “Frequently Asked Questions,” the website characterizes condoms as unreliable, stating that “Condoms...can leak out when the condom is removed and condoms can either break or slip off. This means that fluids can leak that have both sperm and germs present... Studies show different degrees of protection for other STD’s, and there appears to be little risk reduction for bacterial agenesi[sic], trichomonas [sic], and HPV infection.”¹² In fact, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports, “Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of transmission of gonorrhea, Chlamydia, and trichomoniasis.”¹³ In addition, condoms can protect against HPV. According to a University of Washington study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, consistent condom use can cut a woman’s risk of infection by 70 percent and protect her from developing precancerous cervical changes.¹⁴

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

- There are four CBAE grantees in Arkansas: CALEB Initiative/Greater Fellowship Ministries; Earle School District; Reality Check, Inc.; and Tree of Life Preventive Health Maintenance, Inc.
- There is one AFLA grantee in Arkansas: Healthy Connections.

SIECUS has compiled some examples of the use of CBAE and AFLA in Arkansas:

CALEB Initiative, Greater Fellowship Ministries, \$25,000 (2008) and \$350,000 (CBAE 2007–2012)

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 in-school abstinence-only-until-marriage lessons two times a week, an after-school abstinence-only-until-marriage and homework help initiative, and an on-going abstinence-only-until-marriage course 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.¹⁵ CALEB Initiative uses the *Choosing the Best* series.¹⁶ (For more information on *Choosing the Best*, see the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage section.)

A R K A N S A S

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

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.healthyarkansas.com	\$587,519 federal	Title V
Abstinence By Choice, Inc.	\$25,000	Title V sub-grantee
Boys and Girls Club of El Dorado, Inc.	\$22,500	Title V sub-grantee
CALEB Initiative/Greater Fellowship Ministries DUAL GRANTEE 2006–2011	\$25,000 \$350,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Centers for Youth and Families	\$22,500	Title V sub-grantee
Earle School District – Abstinence Education Program DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2012 www.earle.crsc.k12.ar.us	\$43,008 \$300,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Excel Upward, Inc. – Empowerment Through Abstinence	\$47,500	Title V sub-grantee
Healthy Kids, Inc.	\$47,500	Title V sub-grantee
Lee County Family Resource Center	\$8,976	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)
Prim N Proper, Inc./Choosing to EXCEL	\$47,500	Title V sub-grantee
DUAL GRANTEE 2008–2013	\$600,000	CBAE
Reality Check, Inc.	\$25,000	Title V sub-grantee
DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2012 www.realitycheckinc.org	\$600,000	CBAE
Stuttgart Public Schools	\$47,500	Title V sub-grantee
Tree of Life Preventive Health Maintenance, Inc.	\$42,912	Title V sub-grantee
TRIPLE GRANTEE 2005–2008	\$726,164	CBAE
2008–2013 www.whatsmyreality.com	\$512,500	CBAE
Yorktown Community Development Center	\$22,500	Title V sub-grantee
Healthy Connections 2007–2012	\$353,941	AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact¹⁷

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 Child & Adolescent Health Section
 P.O. Box 1437, Slot H17
 Little Rock, AR 72203
 Phone: (501) 280-4751

Arkansas Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

Planned Parenthood Greater
Memphis Region
1407 Union, Suite 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 Street, Suite 2
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: (501) 375-7000
www.familycouncil.org

Newspapers in Arkansas¹⁸

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

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

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

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

Times Record
Newsroom
3600 Wheeler Avenue
Fort Smith, AR 72901
Phone: (479) 785-7748
www.swtimes.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 "About Us," Focus on the Family, accessed 8 October 2008, <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us.aspx>.

⁴ "Mission Statement," Reality Check, Inc., accessed 8 October 2008, <<http://www.realitycheckinc.org/index.html>>.

⁵ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best, Inc., 2001–2007).

⁶ “13 Dimensions of Abstinence,” Reality Check, Inc., accessed 8 October 2008, <<http://www.realitycheckinc.org/id50.html>>.

⁷ “About Us,” Hannah House, accessed 9 October 2008, <<http://www.hannahhouseark.com/about.html>>.

⁸ “How We Can Help,” Hannah House, accessed 9 October 2008, <http://www.hannahhouseark.com/how_we_help.html-programs>.

⁹ The Reality Check! abstinence program and website run by Tree of Life Preventative Health Maintenance, Inc. is unrelated to Reality Check, Inc., the Title V sub-grantee and CBAE grantee mentioned above.

¹⁰ “Why Abstinence?” Reality Check, accessed 9 October 2008, <<http://www.whatsmyreality.com/mainmenu.html>>.

¹¹ For more information on the hearing see SIECUS’ Policy Update, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Holds First-Ever Hearings on Abstinence Only Until Marriage Programs, at

<<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Feature.showFeature&featureid=1144&pageid=483&parentid=478>>.

¹² “Frequently Asked Questions By Students,” Reality Check, accessed 9 October 2008, <<http://www.whatsmyreality.com/faq.html>>.

¹³ “Fact Sheet for Public Health Personnel: Male Latex Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and Human Services, (January 2003), accessed 3 May 2008, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/condoms.pdf>>.

¹⁴ Rachel Winer, Ph.D., “Condom Use and the Risk of Genital Human Papillomavirus Infection in Young Women,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 354.25 (2006): 2645-2654.

¹⁵ Personal communication between Meghan Rapp and Esau Watson, 1 April 2008.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹⁸ This section is a list of major newspapers in your state with contact information for their newsrooms. This list is by no means exhaustive 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](#).