



Arkansas

Arkansas received \$2,970,393 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2003.¹

Arkansas Sexuality Education Law

Arkansas schools are not required to teach sexuality education or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. If a school offers sexuality or STD/HIV education, abstinence must be stressed.

School-based health clinics may teach sexuality education. They are also allowed to prescribe and distribute contraceptives with written parental consent. No state funds may be used to purchase condoms or contraception. 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 maintains curriculum standards for physical and health education. However, these do not include specific guidelines pertaining to sexuality education course content. 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 in place to monitor what subject matter is being covered in health education classes across the state.

The Arkansas Department of Health provides some sexuality education throughout the state. The department works predominantly in high schools and churches in rural areas focusing on condom demonstration and distribution.

See Arkansas Code 6-18-703.

Recent Legislation

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

Events of Note

*ACLU Settles Case About Harassment of Gay Student
July 2003, Pulaski County, AR*

In July of 2003, the ACLU settled a case against the Pulaski County Special School District. The case was brought on behalf of a student who claimed he suffered repeated harassment by school officials after a teacher overheard a conversation in which the student refused to deny that he was gay. The

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

lawsuit alleged that teachers unfairly disciplined him, preached to him from the Bible, and told his parents he was gay.

The district initially defended its conduct by saying that his confession had disrupted the learning process.

In the settlement, the student, a 14 year old boy, received \$25,000 and an apology from school officials and his record was cleared. Also as part of the settlement, the school district can no longer disclose a student's sexual orientation or punish students for discussing their sexual orientation.²

Arkansas' Youth: Statistical Information of Note³

- In 2001, 53% of female high school students and 58% of male high school students in Arkansas reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 43% of female high school students and 49% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2001, 5% of female high school students and 14% of male high school students in Arkansas reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 9% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2001, 16% of female high school students and 25% of male high school students in Arkansas reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 11% of female high school students and 17% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2001, 41% of female high school students and 40% 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 33% of females and 33% of males nationwide.
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 18% of females and 31% of males in Arkansas reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 31% of males nationwide.
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 61% of females and 69% of males in Arkansas reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 51% of females and 65% of males nationwide.
- In 2001, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 21% of females and 9% of males in Arkansas reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.

² "School District, Gay Student Settle Suit," *Associated Press*, July 18, 2003.

³ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: J. Grunbaum, et. al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2001," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 51, no.SS-4, June 28, 2002, pp. 1-64. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>. Arkansas did not participate in the 2003 YRBS.

- In 2001, 7% of female high school students and 5% of male high school students in Arkansas 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 2001, 86% of high school students in Arkansas reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 89% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Arkansas' abortion rate was 12 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁴
- In 2001, Arkansas' birth rate was 62 per 1,000 females ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 45 per 1,000 nationwide.⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Arkansas received \$660,004 in federal 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. Arkansas appropriated \$443,965 of state funds in Fiscal Year 2003. There is also an evaluation component that receives an additional \$294,700 from state funds to evaluate all teenage pregnancy and unwed birth programs in Arkansas. The Arkansas Department of Health has authority over the "Arkansas Abstinence Education Program." There is also a Governor's Steering Committee that oversees the program, which is composed of youth, state legislators, religious leaders, and community members.

In Fiscal Year 1998, the Arkansas Abstinence Education Program was combined with the state's Unwed Birth Reduction Program, a more comprehensive effort that had been created by the state legislature. The Abstinence Education Program also coordinates with Arkansas' county-level welfare reform coalitions.

The Abstinence Education Program does not target any specific age group, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic level. However, the county-level groups are free to target participants based on any of those criteria.

The Arkansas Abstinence Education Program grants the abstinence-only-until-marriage money out to thirteen groups. The state department of health does not release the names of these grantees.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance—Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS—CBAE) and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are six SPRANS—CBAE grants in Arkansas: the Arkansas Department of Health, Mid-South Christian Ministries, Fayetteville Public Schools, Prim 'n Proper/Choosing to EXCEL, Abstinence by Choice, Inc., and Catherine's House. There are no AFLA grantees in Arkansas.

Abstinence by Choice is a three-to-five day program that is aimed at eighth graders. According to its website, "the topics are Self-Esteem and Risk-Taking Behaviors, Tough Choices of Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Dating Strategies. The students are divided into small groups by gender, and given a workbook which contains more information,

⁴ 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.

⁵ A. Papillo, et.al., *Facts at a Glance*, (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February, 2004).

corresponding discussion questions, and homework assignments for each topic. Speakers, including counselors from a crisis pregnancy and adoption center, youth from local organizations, and “women and men who have personally experienced the painful consequences of premarital sex,” also present to the students. At the end of each session, students are given the opportunity to sign a pledge promising to be ‘abstinent from this day forward.’

According to recent research, regardless of whether they have taken a virginity pledge, the majority of young people (88% of pledgers and 99% of non-pledgers) will have sex before they marry. The difference, however, may be that those young people who pledge are likely to marry at younger ages.⁶ Research 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.⁷

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Arkansas Department of Health DUAL GRANTEE 2001-2004 www.healthyarkansas.com	\$660,004 federal/ \$443,965 state \$800,000	Title V SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Mid-South Christian Ministries 2001-2004	\$277,179	SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Fayetteville Public Schools 2001-2004 www.fayar.net	\$465,631	SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation Grant)

⁶ P. Bearman and H. Brückner, "The Relationship Between Virginity Pledges in Adolescence and STD Acquisition in Young Adulthood. After the Promise: The Long-Term Consequences of Adolescent Virginity Pledges," Portions of the study were presented at the *National STD Prevention Conference* in Philadelphia, PA, March 9, 2004, p. 10.

⁷ P. Bearman and H. Brückner "Promising the Future: Virginity Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 106, no. 4 (2001), pp. 859-912.

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant Prim 'n Proper/Choosing to EXCEL 2002-2005 www.choosingtoexcel.org	\$339,842	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Abstinence by Choice, Inc. 2002-2005 www.abstinencebychoice.org	\$172,237	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Catherine's House 2002-2005	\$255,500	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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 Little Rock, AR 72201
 Phone: (501) 374-2660

Arkansas Coalition for Choice
 P.O. Box 23013
 Little Rock, AR 72221
 Phone: (501) 233-2231

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of
 Arkansas
 5512 W. Markham
 Little Rock, AR 72205
 Phone: (501) 666-7526

Arkansas Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

The Vanguard
Vanguard PAC, Inc
P.O. Box 250038
Little Rock, AR 72225
Phone: (501) 960-2020
www.thevanguard.org

Newspapers in Arkansas

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
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