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Iowa received \$1,064,015 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Iowa Sexuality Education Law

Iowa mandates that health education be taught in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Iowa law details what must be included in health education by grade. In first through sixth grade, “the health curriculum shall include the characteristics of communicable diseases including acquired immune deficiency syndrome [AIDS].” In seventh and eighth grade, health education must “include the characteristics of sexually transmitted disease and acquired immune deficiency syndrome.” In ninth through twelfth grade (students must take health education at least once during these four grades), health education must include information on “the prevention and control of disease, including sexually transmitted diseases [STDs] and acquired immune deficiency syndrome.”

The state board of education sets curriculum and accreditation standards for all aspects of the health education program.

Iowa’s educational mandate also states that: “the rules of the state board shall require that a multicultural, nonsexist approach is used by schools and school districts. The educational program shall be taught from a multicultural, nonsexist approach. Global perspectives shall be incorporated into all levels of the educational program.”

Parents or guardians can remove their children from any part of health education courses if the course conflicts with the student’s religious beliefs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Iowa Code 279.50, 256.11, and Iowa Administrative Code 281-12.5.

Recent Legislation

Bill Would Add Sexual Orientation To Antidiscrimination Statutes

Prefiled in December 2004, this legislation would amend Iowa’s civil rights statutes to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This bill would cover access to educational institutions.

Events of Note

Despite Parents’ Objections, Books Dealing with Homosexuality Will Remain October 2004; Solon, IA

A middle school teacher in Solon, Iowa, came under fire from a group of parents who demanded that she stop using stories with gay, lesbian, or transgender characters in her classroom.

In the fairy talk lessons for her eighth-grade language arts class, students read two short stories: “Am I Blue?,” about a boy who is confused about his sexual orientation, and “In the Time I Get,” about a man who befriends a young man dying of AIDS. The teacher explained that both books are intended to promote tolerance and teach respect for all people.

Seven parents filed complaints; however only one of them had a child in the class. The parents argued that the stories have no instructional value and are about controversial issues that should be left up to families to discuss. One father wrote, “the material directly contradicts and undermines the beliefs and teachings of our faith. It introduces a very adult and mature subject to an inappropriately young audience. It is likely to introduce sexual confusion to a group of children who are just becoming sexually aware.”²

The teacher argued that the material has been used on and off for the past five years and that parents have the option of excusing their children from reading the stories. The teacher explained, “I’m trying to teach tolerance and respect for all people. And I can’t do that and ignore a whole group of people. Furthermore, I wouldn’t present a curriculum that ignored women or African-Americans or Hispanics. How can I possibly teach my students to embrace diversity if I systematically exclude an entire group from my literature?”³

A meeting was held in late October at which parents presented their complaints to a nine-member material reconsideration committee. Over 100 people, mostly parents, attended the meeting. One parent accused the district of being “disrespectful” and criticized administrators for not having told parents that the stories would be used. He said the materials promote a “gay agenda” and advocate promiscuity and gay fantasies.⁴ Another parent suggested the school hire a new teacher.

Many people spoke in support of the teacher, including both former and current students who wore rainbow buttons that read “Stop Bullying.” Some said that the material had spurred important discussions at home and in the classroom. One alum remarked that “it seems Solon still has an atmosphere of hostility toward gay people.”⁵ The committee chairwoman discussed the speakers and said, “the students who spoke requested respect for their innate intelligence to be able to deal with controversial material in a mature manner. What struck me most was their repeated admonition, ‘Do not underestimate our intelligence.’” She went on to say that, “I hope that the teachers in the Solon school district continue to stretch our children, and not underestimate their intelligence.”⁶

Eight of the nine committee members voted to keep the material in the eighth grade curriculum. All nine members recommended instituting a policy to inform parents of controversial materials before the school year. Several parents have filed an appeal.

*School District in Iowa Approves Sexual-Orientation Policy Despite Objection
September 2004; Clinton, Iowa*

The Clinton, Iowa school board voted to adopt an equal access to education policy, despite one school board member’s objection to the inclusion of “sexual orientation.”⁷

According to the school board president, the policy change was recommended by the Iowa Board of Education “to promote a safe school environment free of discriminatory and harassment practices.”⁸ The school policy had last been updated in 1997 and since then legal changes require public school districts to protect students of all backgrounds (including gay and lesbian students) from harassment.

The school board member disagreed with the proposal to add “sexual orientation” to the policy and read a statement during a prior board meeting announcing that his “conservative

and moral values are in conflict with this policy amendment.”⁹ He said that the change would help bring “widespread acceptance—legitimization—of sexual orientation as a unique and protected class....Anything that smoothes the path to public acceptance, legitimization and eventual legalization is morally wrong. I also believe that most religions represented in our community believe and teach that gay and lesbian sexual activity is morally wrong, and therefore the majority of our constituents will agree with me on this issue.”¹⁰

The school superintendent supported the proposal and said the issue really “comes down to what is right for kids,” which he said is making school a safe environment. He said “it’s really about sending a message to all kids, regardless of who they are, that you can come here and should expect a safe environment, regardless of who you are, what you think, how you feel.”¹¹

Play Discussing Homosexuality Sparks Concerns

March 2003; Dubuque, IA

On the Down Low, a play that depicts true stories of “the crisis of bullying and anti-gay harassment in schools,” received criticism when it was performed at a Dubuque, IA, school in late March 2003.

Thirty-five members of a local church presented the Dubuque Community School Board with a petition asking that the play not be performed during school hours. In addition, many members sent letters of complaint arguing that the play teaches acceptance of a homosexual lifestyle. The visiting pastor at the church said, “the feeling behind the petition is that it’s wrong for our schools to promote a program that would undermine what is taught in many homes and churches.”⁶

School officials disagree, however. The Superintendent said that they responded to the people who sent letters and complained, but that the play was in line with the district’s nondiscrimination and harassment policy, which includes sexual orientation. He went on to say, “we believe that understanding discrimination as it applies to the experience of someone who is homosexual is fully within the intent of the Board’s policy. As a School District, we teach about many things but do not endorse them.”⁷

Sex Advice Book Banned

September 2002; Dyersville, IA

Sari Says: The Real Dirt on Everything from Sex to School, a book written by the advice columnist for the online edition of *Teen People* magazine, was recently banned from the James Kennedy Public Library in Dyersville, IA.

Board members made the decision due to “inappropriate” content.¹⁴ In her book, Sari Locker answers questions on everything from interracial dating to sexual health to alternatives to intercourse.

When the book was first received in the library, a trustee looked through it and asked that it not be placed on the shelf. After the librarian refused, the trustee brought the issue to the June Library Board meeting where the board voted seven to zero to ban the book from the shelves, with two abstentions. Two more votes were held in the summer and both times the trustees voted to ban the book as they felt it was “inappropriate” and too sexually explicit.

Locker, on the other hand, states, “as a teen educator, I know that when a teen asks me a question about sex, they need an honest, accurate answer because otherwise they’re going to be getting information from sources that are not positive-value based or encouraging sexual health.”

Iowa's Youth: Statistical Information of Note¹²

- In 2001, 42% of female high school students and 44% of male high school students in Iowa reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 43% of female high school students and 49% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2001, 3% of female high school students and 5% of male high school students in Iowa 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, 11% of female high school students and 14% of male high school students in Iowa 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, 34% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students in Iowa 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, 21% of females and 29% of males in Iowa 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, 52% of females and 66% of males in Iowa 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, 30% of females and 20% of males in Iowa reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.
- In 2001, 3% of female high school students and 1% of male high school students in Iowa 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, 90% of high school students in Iowa reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 89% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Iowa's abortion rate was 12 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹³
- In 2002, women ages 15-19 accounted for 19% of the 6,230 total abortions performed in Iowa.¹⁴

- In 2002, Iowa's birth rate was 33 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Iowa received \$325,003 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2004. 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. In previous years, the state provided the full three-to-four match; however, due to recent budget cuts, Iowa no longer provides the match and instead the Title V sub-grantees go beyond the federal requirement by providing a one-to-one match.

Sub-grantees use a variety of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula. Three of the organizations use Mike Long's *Everyone is Not Doing It* video. The Crittenton Center has also employed Mike Long, a nationally known abstinence-only-until-marriage speaker, as a presenter. Three of the organizations utilize the abstinence-only-until-marriage program *Girl Talk, Guy Talk* for their trainings. The Marshalltown Medical and Surgical Center uses the *STARS* curriculum and a video produced by Focus on the Family entitled *Sex, Lies, and Truth*. The Finley Tri-State Health Group uses the *Choosing the Best* series, which includes *Choosing the Best LIFE*, *Choosing the Best PATH*, and *Choosing the Best WAY* for high school, upper middle school, and lower middle school students respectively.

SIECUS reviewed *Choosing the Best LIFE* and found that it names numerous physical and psychological consequences of premarital sexual activity, suggests that sexually active teens will never have a happy future, and implies that only teens with low self-esteem and poor judgment become sexually active. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states: "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."¹⁶

SIECUS also reviewed *Choosing the Best PATH* and found that it provides endless information on the negative consequences of premarital sexual activity and utilizes a variety of tactics to suggest that teens should feel guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed of sexual behavior. For example, *Choosing the Best PATH* states "couples who use condoms for birth control experience a first-year failure rate of about 15 % in preventing pregnancies. This means that over a period of five years, there could be a 50% chance or higher of getting pregnant with condoms used as the birth control method."¹⁷

Several organizations also use a media campaign to stress the abstinence message. The media campaign consists of radio and television ads and usually involves the input of the Mike Long program participants. The media campaign is often combined with outreach through health fairs or with the formation of resource rooms. For example, the Hillcrest Family Services has established a Teen/Family Information Center on the Finley Hospital Campus, the American Home Finding Association has created a Teen Leader group to work with younger students on subjects related to abstinence, and the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program has implemented a mentoring program.

Title V Evaluation

The Iowa Department of Public Health evaluated its Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage programs during the 2002-2003 academic year. The programs targeted young people ages 10-17 and used multiple curricula that included *Choosing the Best* and *AC Green's Game Plan*.

Iowa's review involved pre- and post-test surveys of students in abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and data from a comparison group of 4,954 students who participated in comprehensive sexuality education programs. Students in the abstinence-only programs were slightly more likely to feel strongly about postponing sex; however, in four of the five programs the number of participants reporting having had sex increased between the pre- and post-test.¹⁸ In addition, students in the comprehensive sexuality education programs were found to be more knowledgeable about body changes during puberty and more comfortable asking questions about sex.¹⁹ According to the Iowa Department of Public Health report "APP [comprehensive sexuality education] programs also had higher scores among youth who understood how their decisions about sex could change their futures and felt their goals should not include teen pregnancy."²⁰

Iowa's evaluations were reviewed by Advocates for Youth (AFY) in its 2004 report *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact*.²¹ AFY found that the abstinence-only-until-marriage programs encouraged small positive changes in youth attitudes toward abstinence, but failed to provide participants with a better understanding of why their decisions mattered.²²

The curricula used in Iowa were also reviewed by U.S. Representative Henry Waxman in his report *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs* and were found to have "major errors and distortions of public health information."²³

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance—Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS—CBAE)²⁴ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are two SPRANS grantees in Iowa: Sexual Health Education Inc. and the Iowa Department of Health. There are no AFLA grantees in Iowa.

Through its SPRANS—CBAE grant, the Iowa Department of Public Health funds three organizations: Bethany Christian Services of Northwest Iowa, Empower Through Crossroads of Pella, and North Iowa Community Action Organization. These organizations focus on rural areas and, because of the SPRANS—CBAE grant, will work in multiple communities. The three organizations will use a variety of curricula, including *Choosing the Best PATH; Empower, Creating Positive Relationships: Choosing Healthy Live; A.C. Green's Game Plan; No Apologies: The Truth About Life, Love, and Sex; and Worth the Wait*.

SIECUS reviewed *Game Plan* and 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 "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."²⁵

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2004²⁶

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Iowa Department of Public Health	\$325,003	Title V
DUAL GRANTEE 2002-2005 www.idph.state.ia.us	\$317,512	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Allen Memorial Hospital (Women's Health Department)		Title V sub-grantee
American Home Finding Association		Title V sub-grantee
Bethany Christian Services DUAL GRANTEE	\$88,382	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (through IDPH)
Community Opportunities Inc.		Title V sub-grantee
The Crittenton Center		Title V sub-grantee
Empower Through Crossroads of Pella TRIPLE GRANTEE TRIPLE GRANTEE	\$59,902	Title V sub-grantee (received 2 Title V sub-grants) SPRANS-CBAE (through IDPH)
Finley Tri-State Health Group		Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Hawkeye Area Community Action Program		Title V sub-grantee
Hillcrest Family Services		Title V sub-grantee
Interstate 35 Community School District		Title V sub-grantee
Marshalltown Medical and Surgical Center		Title V sub-grantee
Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.		Title V sub-grantee
North Iowa Community Action Organization DUAL GRANTEE	\$45,395	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (though IDPH)
Scott County Health Department		Title V sub-grantee
Sexual Health Education, Inc. Triple Grantee 2002-2005 www.equippingyouth.org	\$421,500	Title V sub-grantee (received 2 Title V sub-grants) SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Unity Public Health		Title V sub-grantee
Upper Des Moines Opportunity		Title V sub-grantee
Women's Health Services		Title V sub-grantee

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Iowa Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

IA NOW
PO Box 41114
Des Moines, IA 50311
www.geocities.com/iowa_now

IA Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice
PO Box 41307
Des Moines, IA 50311
Phone: (515) 279-2936

Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa
851 19th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
Phone: (515) 280-7000
www.ppgi.org

Iowa Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Christian Coalition of Iowa
PO Box 65066
West Des Moines, IA 50265
Phone: (866) 557-9266
www.iowachristian.com

Iowa Family Policy Council (IFPC)
1100 N. Hickory Blvd., Suite 105
Pleasant Hill, IA 50327
Phone: (515) 263-3495
www.iowaprofamily.org

IA Right to Life Committee
1500 Illinois St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
Phone: (515) 244-1012
www.irlc.org

Newspapers in Iowa

Courier
Catherine Kittrell
Community News Editor
501 Commercial St.
Waterloo, IA 50701
Phone: (319) 291-1462

The Daily Nonpareil
Tim Johnson
Medical/Health Reporter
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The Sioux City Journal
Julie Weeder
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515 Pavonia St.
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Phone: (712) 293-4228

Telegraph Herald
Erik Hogstrom
Medical/Health Reporter
801 Bluff St.
Dubuque, IA 52001
Phone: (563) 588-5670

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 2004 begins on October 1, 2003 and ends on September 30, 2004.

² Deidre Bello, "Parents Want Gay Literature Removed," *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, 23 October 2004, accessed 26 October 2004, <<http://www.press-citizen.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041023/NEWS01/410230322/1079>>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Deidre Bello, "Solon Debates Class Material," *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, 27 October 2004, accessed 23 November 2004,

<<http://www.press-citizen.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041027/NEWS01/410270308/1079>>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Deidre Bello, "School Group OKs Gay Literature," *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, 29 October 2004, accessed 23 November 2004, <<http://www.press-citizen.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041029/NEWS01/410290311/1079>>.

⁷ Dave Vickers, "Orientation Policy Gets OK," *The Quad-City Times* (IA), 13 October 2004, <<http://www.qctimes.com/internal.php?t=Search&doc=/2004/10/13/stories/gatetms/1037124.txt>>.

⁸ K. Luna, "School board member speaks against sexual-orientation policy," *The Quad-City Times*, 30 September 2004.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: Jo Anne Grunbaum, et. al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2001," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 51.SS-4, (28 June 2002): 1-64. accessed 28 January, 2005, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>>. Iowa did not participate in the 2003 YRBS.

¹³ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, February, 2004), accessed 28 January 2005, <www.guttmacher.org>.

¹³ Angela Papillo, et.al., *Facts at a Glance*, (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February, 2004).

¹⁴ Jingjing Chen, et. al., *2002 Iowa Termination of Pregnancy Report*, (Iowa: Iowa Department of Public Health State Center for Health Statistics, 2002), accessed 10 February 2005,

<<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/common/pdf/publications/itoprept02.pdf>>.

¹⁵ *National Vital Statistics Reports 52.10* (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2003), 48, accessed 4 February 2005, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm#stat%20tables>>.

¹⁶ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE-Student Workbook* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000), 9.

¹⁷ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best PATH-Leader Guide* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000), 18.

¹⁸ E.J. Saunders et al., *Evaluation of Abstinence Only Education in Iowa: Year Five Report* (Iowa City, IA: Iowa Department of Public Health, October 2003).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 80.

²¹ Debra Hauser, *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact* (Washington, D.C: Advocates for Youth, 2004), 10

²² Ibid.

²³ *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*, prepared for Representative Henry A. Waxman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform—Minority Staff Special Investigations Division (December 2004), accessed on 10 December 2004,

<<http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov/Documents/20041201102153-50247.pdf>>.

²⁴ In FY 2004 SPRANS–CBAE was administered within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. In FY 2005 this funding stream was moved to HHS' Administration for Children and Families and is now referred to simply as Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE).

²⁵ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A.C. Green's Game Plan* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2001), 45.

²⁶ SIECUS was not able to obtain exact funding information for all grantees.