



LOUISIANA

The Governor's Program on Abstinence and community-based organizations in Louisiana received \$2,610,045 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2008.¹

Louisiana Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Louisiana does not require schools to offer sexuality or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education, but schools are permitted to offer it after sixth grade. State law mandates that sexuality education cannot be offered in kindergarten through sixth grade, except in Orleans Parish, which may offer sexuality education in the third grade and above. Schools must provide this education “regardless of the student’s grade level” if the student is parenting or pregnant.

Louisiana law defines sexuality education as:

[T]he dissemination of factual biological or pathological information that is related to the human reproduction system and may include the study of sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, menstruation, and menopause, as well as the dissemination of factual information about parental responsibilities under the child support laws of the state.

The education must be integrated into “an existing course study such as biology, science, physical hygiene, or physical education.” It cannot include “religious beliefs, practices in human sexuality, nor the subjective moral and ethical judgments of the instructor or other persons. Students shall not be tested, quizzed, or surveyed about their personal or family beliefs or practices in sex, morality, or religion.”

Classes may not include “any sexually explicit materials depicting male or female homosexual activity.” They also may not in “any way counsel or advocate abortion.” In addition, this education must emphasize:

- abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
- abstinence from sexual activity is a way to avoid unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and other associated health problems; and
- each student has the power to control personal behavior and to encourage students to base action on reasoning, self-esteem, and respect for others.

Louisiana also requires that all public high schools that offer home economics classes must also provide “parenthood education,” which must include the topics of family living and community relationships, the consequences of the lack of adequate prenatal care, home management, and the responsibilities of parenthood.

In addition, Louisiana now requires that adoption awareness be included in any health education or appropriate class. This includes instruction on “the benefits of adoption for families wishing to add a child, for potential adoptees, and for persons who are pregnant or who have a child for whom they are unable to care.”

According to the *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*, students must be taught “the principle modes by which communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, HIV infection, are spread and the best methods for the restriction and prevention of these diseases.”

Parents or guardians may remove their children from sexuality education and/or STD/HIV education classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Louisiana Revised Statutes 17:263, 17:279, 17:281, and *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators-Bulletin 741*.

Recent Legislation

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

Louisiana’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note

New Orleans, Louisiana²

- In 2005, 52% of female high school students and 74% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 5% of female high school students and 29% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana 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 2005, 13% of female high school students and 47% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 17% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 39% of female high school students and 53% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 74% of females and 85% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 56% of females and 70% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 8% of females and 7% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.

LOUISIANA

- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 11% of females and 21% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 28% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, 79% of high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

- Louisiana received \$1,283,563 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.
- Louisiana's Abstinence Director, Gail Dignam, refused to provide SIECUS with information on how the match is made.
- In Louisiana, the Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA) manages the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding. GPA is the only abstinence-only-until-marriage program in the country run by the state's executive branch.

The GPA program consists of several components:

- Curriculum for seventh grade students developed by the GPA. Local school boards must approve the program.
- Teacher training across the state for both public and private schools.
- GPA Clubs in high schools which are designed to train young abstinent advocates and provide support for young people making the decision to remain abstinent.

Louisiana's GPA has been controversial since its inception, in part, for its reliance on blatantly religious messages. In 2002, the ACLU filed suit against the GPA claiming that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state by using federal and state abstinence-only-until-marriage funds to convey religious messages and advance religion. Later that year, the two parties reached a settlement. As part of the settlement, the GPA must review lessons and curricula prior to their use and must post a statement on its website and all promotional materials that reads:

The GPA is a health and education program committed to promoting and publicizing the benefits of abstinence. Under limits imposed by the Constitution, the GPA's funds may not be used for activities, events or materials that include religious messages or otherwise promote or advance religion.

Much of the information that the ACLU commented on in its 2004 complaint remains up on GPA's website, including the advice suggesting that a young woman stays "cool" in God's eyes.³ Another letter of advice on the website shows the GPA's biases against abortion. In answer to the question, "Is abortion murder?" the GPA's website provides dictionary definitions of abortion, murder, embryo, and fetus. Though the site does acknowledge that abortion is not a crime in the United States, it implies that abortion does meet the criteria for murder because "According to the

definitions, an embryo or fetus is a person because it is human and is an individual, never-to-be-repeated being.”⁴ In fact, on the “Asks the Experts” page of the Governor’s Program on Abstinence, there are no less than nine references to God from “experts.”⁵

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

- There are three CBAE grantees in Louisiana: The Church United for Community Development, Operation Turn Around, and Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc.
- There are no AFLA grantees in Louisiana.

The Church United for Community Development, \$589,258 (CBAE 2007–2012)

The Church United for Community Development uses its CBAE funds to conduct an abstinence-only-until-marriage program in Donaldsonville in Ascension Parish and in the Melrose East area of Baton Rouge, which represent the city’s poorest communities.⁶ The program offers recreation activities, computer classes, tutoring, and special activities to youth ages 12–18.⁷

The program uses *Why kNOW*, a popular abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum created by a crisis pregnancy center in Tennessee. SIECUS reviewed *Why kNOW* and found that it offers limited information about important topics in human sexuality such as puberty, anatomy, and human reproduction, and no information about sexual orientation and gender identity. The information that is included is outdated, inaccurate, and misleading. In addition, *Why kNOW* relies on negative messages, distorts information, and presents biased views on gender, marriage, family structure, sexual orientation, and pregnancy options. For example, the curriculum tells students that the tradition of lifting the veil shows that “the groom [is] the only man allowed to uncover the bride,” and demonstrates “her respect for him by illustrating that she [has] not allowed any other man to lay claim to her.”⁸

Operation Turn Around, \$347,844 (CBAE 2005–2008)

Reverend Charles Sims of Know Your Bible Ministries (KYBM), which operates Operation Turn Around, stated that the mission of the program is:

to provide abstinence education, leadership, character development, and adolescent risk behavior intervention against drugs, alcohol, sex and violence for the purpose of preparing young people and young adults to make healthy choices while pursuing their dreams to become self-sufficient leaders in their families, schools, communities, faith-based [lives] and careers.⁹

Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc., \$389,380 (CBAE 2007–2012)

Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc. operates a number of social services and programs to combat poverty. The organization’s stated values are “to honor people, especially the vulnerable and the weak, to empower the poor to take control of their own lives, to take action in eliminating poverty, and to be mindful of the plight of the impoverished.”¹⁰ The agency operates the “Purity Pays” abstinence-only-until-marriage program which “provides principle centered leadership and knowledge needs to set goals, reach goals and the will to say no to sex, drugs and alcohol.”¹¹ The program reaches adolescents in four parishes in southern Louisiana.

Purity Pays uses the *Worth the Wait* abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum. SIECUS reviewed *Worth the Wait* and 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

LOUISIANA

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.”¹²

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)
Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence (GPA) www.abstinencedu.com	\$1,283,563 federal	Title V
The Church United for Community Development 2007–2012	\$589,258	CBAE
Operation Turn Around 2005–2008 www.operationturnaround.org	\$347,844	CBAE
Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc. 2007–2012 www.quadarea.org	\$389,380	CBAE

Adolescent Health Contact¹³

Gail Dignam
 State Coordinator/Director
 Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence
 150 Third Street, Suite 404
 Baton Rouge, LA 70801
 Phone: (225) 342-5818

LOUISIANA

Louisiana Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Louisiana
P.O. Box 56157
New Orleans, LA 70156
Phone: (504) 522-0617
www.laclu.org

AIDS Law of Louisiana
P.O. Box 30203
New Orleans, LA 70190
Phone: (504) 568-1631
www.aidslaw.org

Louisiana NOW
P.O. Box 750356
New Orleans, LA 70175
Phone: (504) 364-4444
www.now.org/chapters/la.html

NO/AIDS Task Force
2601 Tulane Avenue, Suite 500
New Orleans, LA 70119
Phone: (504) 821-2601
www.noaidstaskforce.org

Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and the
Mississippi Delta
8200 Hampton Street, Suite 229
New Orleans, LA 70118
Phone: (504) 861-7550
www.plannedparenthoodlouisiana.org

Louisiana Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Louisiana Family Forum
655 St. Ferdinand Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Phone: (225) 344-8533
www.lafamilyforum.org

Louisiana Right to Life Federation
P.O. Box 7962
Metairie, LA 70010
Phone: (504) 835-6520
<http://www.prolifelouisiana.org>

Newspapers in Louisiana¹⁴

The Advocate
Newsroom
PO Box 588
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: (225) 388-0282
www.theadvocate.com

The Daily Advertiser
Newsroom
221 Jefferson Street
Lafayette, LA 70501
Phone: (337) 289-6300
www.theadvertiser.com

Lake Charles American Press
Newsroom
4900 Highway 90 E
Lake Charles, LA 70615
Phone: (337) 494-4080
www.americanpress.com

The News-Star
Newsroom
411 N. 4th Street
Monroe, LA 71201
Phone: (318) 322-5161
www.thenewsstar.com

LOUISIANA

The Times
Newsroom
22 Lake Street
Shreveport, LA 71101
Phone: (318) 459-3200
www.shreveporttime.com

Times-Picayune
Newsroom
3800 Howard Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
Phone: (504) 826-3300
www.nola.com/t-p

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>>. Note: Louisiana did not participate in the YRBS in either 2007 or 2005. New Orleans participated in 2005.

³ "Ask the Experts," Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence, accessed 3 June 2008, <<http://www.abstinencedu.com/explore.cfm/viewqanda/>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Donaldsonville to get abstinence grant," *The Advocate*, (24 October 2003), accessed 19 October 2008, <http://www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/news/article_print.cfm?id=1004>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kris Frainie, *Why kNOW Abstinence Education Program Teacher's Manual*, (Chattanooga, TN: Why kNow Abstinence Education Programs, A Division of AAA Women's Services, 2002). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Why kNOW* at <<http://www.communityactionkit.org/reviews/WhyKnow.html>>.

⁹ S. T. Herring, "Possible Uses for Old Homer Junior High Discussed," *The Guardian-Journal*, 27 July 2006, accessed 18 March 2008, <<http://www.kcwd.com/gj/2006/briefs-2006-07-27.html>>.

¹⁰ "About Us," Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc. (2008), accessed 19 October 2008, <<http://www.quadarea.org/pgs/Page.php?PG=About>>.

¹¹ "Youth Development," Quad Area Community Action Agency, Inc. (2008), accessed 19 October 2008, <<http://www.quadarea.org/pgs/Home.php?BLD=X>>.

¹² Patricia Sulak, *Worth the Wait* (Temple, TX: Scott & White Memorial Hospital, 2003). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Worth the Wait* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

¹³ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹⁴ 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](#).