



SIECUS

State Profile

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The Department of Human Services and community-based organizations in Mississippi received approximately \$8,360,205 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Mississippi Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Mississippi schools are not required to teach sexuality education or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. If schools choose to teach either or both forms of education, they must stress abstinence-until-marriage, including “the likely negative psychological and physical effects of not abstaining” and “that abstinence from sexual activity before marriage, and fidelity within marriage, is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually-transmitted diseases and related health problems.” In addition, monogamous heterosexual relationships must be presented as the only appropriate place for sexual intercourse. Mississippi’s *Comprehensive Health Framework* includes education on health promotion and disease prevention of for ninth through twelfth grades.

If the school board authorizes the teaching of contraception, state law dictates that the failure rates and risks of each contraceptive method must be included and “in no case shall the instruction or program include any demonstration of how condoms or other contraceptives are applied.”

Local school boards may also authorize through a majority vote “the teaching of sex education without instructions on abstinence.” The Department of Health must implement a “Teen Pregnancy Pilot Program” in districts with the highest number of teen pregnancies. Such programs are coordinated through the school nurse and include education on abstinence, reproductive health, teen pregnancy, and STDs. Mississippi public school nurses may not provide abortion counseling to students nor may they refer students to abortion services.

Parents or guardians must be notified of any sexuality education instruction and have the ability to remove their children from any or all sexuality education classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Mississippi Education Code 37-13-171, 37-31-173, 41-79-5, and *Comprehensive Health Framework*.

Recent Legislation

Legislation Provides funds for HIV/AIDS Services Including Outreach and Education

House Bill 590, introduced in January 2007 and assigned to the House Committee on Appropriations, would have directed seven million dollars to HIV/AIDS-related services, including three million dollars for HIV/AIDS education and outreach in three targeted public health districts in the state. The bill died in committee in February 2007.

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Legislation to Establish a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Pilot Program, Abstinence Education Pilot Program, and School Nurse Intervention Program

House Bill 867, introduced in January 2007 and assigned to the House Committees on Education and Public Health and Human Services, would establish three programs. The State Department of Education would be required to create a “Teen Pregnancy Prevention Pilot Program” for schools with the highest rates of teen pregnancy. The State Department of Health would also be required to establish two additional programs. First, a “School Nurse Intervention Program” for all public school districts in the state. Under this program, all school districts would be required to employ school nurses to offer, among other things, “reproductive health education and referral to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, which education shall include abstinence.” As is currently the law in Mississippi, the program would specifically prohibit nurses from providing or referring any student to abortion counseling or abortion services. Any violation of the above would disqualify the school district employing the school nurse from receiving any state funds under the program. Second, to the extent state funds are available, the bill would require the State Department of Health to establish and implement an “Abstinence Education Pilot Program” that would follow the federal 8-point definition of “abstinence education.” The bill would allow parents to remove their children from reproductive health education in any of these programs.

Legislation to Establish HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education Services in Underserved Areas

House Bill 1625 and Senate Bill 2933, introduced in January 2007 and referred to their respective Committees on Appropriations, would have required the State Department of Health to develop and operate two “STD/HIV” specialty clinics in underserved areas of the state (north central and southwest Mississippi). In addition, the department would have been required to incorporate “science-based, age-, culturally and linguistically appropriate STD/HIV prevention and education messages and interventions through clinic and outreach encounters in the counties immediately surrounding the clinics.” HB 1625 appropriated 6 million dollars to these efforts, including 1 million dollars for the HIV prevention and education messages and outreach. Both bills died in committee.

Legislation to Establish a Pilot Program for Preventing Teen Pregnancy

House Bill 1491 and Senate Bill 2869 were introduced in January 2007. HB 1491 was referred to the House Committee on Education and SB 2869 was referred to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare and the Senate Committee on Appropriations. These bills would have required the State Department of Education, acting jointly with the Mississippi Community Education Center, to establish a pilot program aimed at preventing teen pregnancy in the East Tallahatchie Consolidated School District for two years. (See the CBAE and AFLA section for more information on the Mississippi Community Education Center.) The program would have been designed for students age 10 and older, their parents, and the community at large. The bills would have required pregnancy prevention curriculum to be integrated into currently existing curriculum and present meaningful information on “abstinence and healthy choices” for teenagers. Both bills died in committee.

Events of Note

SIECUS is not aware of any recent events regarding sexuality education in Mississippi.

Mississippi's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- In 2007, 54% of female high school students and 65% of male high school students in Mississippi 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 21% of male high school students in Mississippi 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 30% of male high school students in Mississippi 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, 41% of female high school students and 43% of male high school students in Mississippi 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, 60% of females and 74% of males in Mississippi 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, 20% of females and 12% of males in Mississippi 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, 11% of females and 24% of males in Mississippi 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, 82% of high school students in Mississippi 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 Mississippi Department of Human Services was eligible for \$828,953 in federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage 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. In previous years, the state provided \$621,715 in state funds for the match. SIECUS was unable to obtain information on exact amount the state received or how the state made up the required match in Fiscal Year 2007.

The funding is controlled by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) through the Mississippi Abstinence Education program (MAEP). The agency spends part of the abstinence-only-until-marriage funds on a state-wide campaign and distributes part of the funding to at least 13

sub-grantees. In addition to receiving Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funds, the department also receives CBAE monies.

The statewide campaign in Mississippi is titled “Just Wait!” On its website, it says: “Love is Patient. Love is Kind. LOVE WAITS! Real love waits for marriage.”³ This is clearly paraphrased from the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13:4. The state has set a goal, using this program, to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third before 2015.⁴ The objectives of the “Love Waits” program in Mississippi are:

- Encourage COMMUNITY efforts to establish and sustain teen pregnancy prevention programs
- Encourage PARENTS to talk to their teens, opening the lines of communication, taking an interest in their friends and loving them
- Encourage EDUCATORS to teach character-building and abstinence
- Encourage CHURCHES to involve young people in youth activities and services, and to provide sexuality and values training
- Encourage LEGISLATORS to change and enforce laws, fund long-term teen pregnancy prevention and educational character-building programs
- Encourage MEDIA to use Public Service Announcements to support the message of abstinence outside of marriage
- Reach out to TEENS, providing them with the facts, educating them of the risks involved in premarital sexual activities and enable them to make educated, responsible decisions, discovering that the only safe answer is abstinence⁵

The MAEP also produced a series of public service announcements.⁶ According to the MDHS, “A video entitled *In the Heat of the Moment* was developed featuring teens in Mississippi addressing problems associated with premarital sexual activity and out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Public Service Announcements were developed to publicize and support the message of abstinence outside of marriage.”⁷

One of the three parts of the MDHS video is narrated by a young man named Patrick who describes his experience in becoming a teen dad.⁸ Patrick also discusses the difficulty of having a baby with birth defects. He says, “If you wait, you’re doing yourself a favor.” A second spot features a young woman named Stephanie who drops out of high school after becoming pregnant.⁹

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

There are eleven CBAE grantees in Mississippi: Booneville School District, the Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast, Community Matters, Inc. (receives two grants), Mississippi Community Development Corporation, the Mississippi Community Education Center, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc., Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc., Shaw School District, Starkville School District, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. There is one AFLA grantee in Mississippi: Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

One CBAE grantee, Community Matters, Inc., describes itself as “a faith-inspired, community non-profit organization.”¹⁰ Community Matters, Inc. runs the Rural Abstinence Partnership and is an affiliate partner of the Abstinence Clearinghouse.¹¹ (See the Title V section of the South Dakota *SIECUS State Profile* for more information on the Abstinence Clearinghouse.) The Rural Abstinence Partnership conducts abstinence-only-until-marriage programming for young people ages twelve to eighteen in four rural counties in central Mississippi.¹²

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The Partnership also hosted the “Teen Rite of Passage Cultural Celebration and Parent Conference” in June 2007 in Jackson, Mississippi.¹³ Local high school principal Robert Mack spoke at the event and told the youth that “the bible says to abstain from fornication; and that’s just a big word for don’t do that.” He went on to say that the young people were “in the perfect will of God and obedient to a divine mandate.”¹⁴ More than 300 young people took a virginity pledge at the event,

Research has found that under certain conditions these pledges may help some adolescents delay sexual intercourse. When they work, pledges help this select group of adolescents delay the onset of sexual intercourse for an average of 18 months—far short of marriage. Researchers found that pledges only worked when taken by a small group of students. Pledges taken by a whole class were ineffective. More importantly, the studies 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. These teens are therefore more vulnerable to the risks of unprotected sexual activity such as unintended pregnancy and STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Further research has confirmed that although some students who take pledges delay intercourse, ultimately they are equally as likely to contract an STD as their non-pledging peers. The study also found that STD rates were higher in communities where a significant proportion (over 20 percent) of the young people had taken virginity pledges.¹⁵

In addition to a Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grant, the Mississippi Department of Human Services receives a CBAE grant. (See the Title V section for more information on the Mississippi Department of Human Services.)

Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc. (PHSC) provides abstinence-only-until-marriage programs for middle school students.¹⁶ PHSC specifically works with students ages 12–15 in Scott County schools with abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that involve “health education, peer mentoring, parent involvement, and outreach services.”¹⁷

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)
Mississippi Department of Human Services DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2011 www.mdhs.state.ms.us	\$828,953* federal \$599,800	Title V CBAE
Boys and Girls Club of Central Mississippi www.bgccm.net	\$60,000	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)
Communities in Schools of Greenwood Leflore www.communities-in-schools.org	\$58,366	Title V sub-grantee
Downtown Jackson Community Development Corporation www.downtownjackson.com	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Forrest County School District www.forrest.k12.ms.us	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Lawrence County School District www.lawrence.k12.ms.us	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Mayersville Youth Development Committee	\$57,495.22	Title V sub-grantee
National Council Against Alcohol and Drug Dependents of Central Mississippi	\$52,886.38	Title V sub-grantee
Pearson Foundation	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Poplarville School District www.poplarvilleschools.org	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Positive Living Inc.	\$59,738	Title V sub-grantee
Robert Hill Youth Foundation	\$49,278	Title V sub-grantee
Save a Life of Amory/Monroe County	\$48,405.10	Title V sub-grantee
South Mississippi Abstinence Education Program	\$59,963	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)
Youth Alive/Alive Jones County	\$60,000	Title V sub-grantee
Youth Opportunities Unlimited TRIPLE GRANTEE 2004–2009 TRIPLE GRANTEE 2007–2011	\$42,000 \$260,633 \$589,258	Title V sub-grantee AFLA CBAE
Booneville School District 2004–2007 www.booneville.k12.ms.us	\$282,784	CBAE
Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast 2005–2008 www.bgccgulfcoast.org	\$682,520	CBAE
Community Matters, Inc. 2004–2007	\$784,227	CBAE
DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2011	\$600,000	CBAE
Mississippi Community Development Corporation 2004–2007	\$800,000	CBAE
The Mississippi Community Education Center 2004–2007	\$750,600	CBAE

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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)
Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc. 2007–2011	\$600,000	CBAE
Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. 2006–2011	\$600,000	CBAE
Shaw School District 2006–2011 www2.mde.k12.ms.us/0615/shdhot.htm	\$600,000	CBAE
Starkville School District 2005–2008	\$381,430	CBAE

** SIECUS was unable to obtain the exact amount of Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding Mississippi received or the exact amounts awarded to each sub-grantee in Fiscal Year 2007.*

Adolescent Health Contact¹⁸

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Division of Economic Assistance/MAEP
P.O. Box 352
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Phone: (601)359-4312

Mississippi Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Mississippi
P.O. Box 2242
Jackson, MS 39225
Phone: (601) 355-6464
www.msacclu.org

Equality Mississippi
P.O. Box 1114
Jackson, MS 39060
www.equalityms.org

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

Mississippi Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

American Family Association
P.O. Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS
Phone: (662) 844-5036
www.afa.net

Mississippi Center for Public Policy
P.O. Box 13514
Jackson, MS 39236
Phone: (601) 969-1300
www.msppolicy.org

Newspapers in Mississippi¹⁹

The Clarion-Ledger
Newsroom
201 S. Congress St.
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: (601) 961-7175
www.clarionledger.com

Commercial Dispatch
Newsroom
P.O. Box 511
Columbus, MS 39703-0511
Phone: (662) 328-2471
www.cdispatch.com

Delta Democrat Times
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1618
Greenville, MS 38701
Phone: (662) 335-1155
www.ddtonline.com

Enterprise-Journal
Newsroom
P.O. Box 2009
McComb, MS 39649
Phone: (601) 684-2421
www.enterprise-journal.com

Hattiesburg American
Newsroom
825 N. Main St.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Phone: (601) 582-4321
www.hattiesburgamerican.com

Meridian Star
Newsroom
P.O. Box 1591
Meridian, MS 39302
Phone: (601) 693-1551
www.meridianstar.com

Mississippi Press
Newsroom
1225 Jackson Ave.
Pascagoula, MS 39567
Phone: (228) 762-3805
www.gulfive.com/mississippipress

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal
Newsroom
P.O. Box 909
Tupelo, Mississippi 38802-0909
Phone: (662) 842-2611
www.djournal.com/pages/DailyJournal

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Rankin Ledger
Newsroom
2001 Airport Rd, Ste. 207
Jackson, MS 39208
Phone: (601) 961-7175
www.rankinledger.com

Sun Herald
Newsroom
P.O. Box 4567
Biloxi MS 39535-4567
Phone: (228) 896-2390
www.sunherald.com

Vicksburg Post
Newsroom
1601-F N. Frontage Road
P.O. Box 821668
Vicksburg, MS 39182
Phone: (601) 636-4545
www.vicksburgpost.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, 2007 and ends on September 30, 2007.

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 "Division of Economic Assistance, 'Just Wait' Abstinence Unit," Mississippi Department of Human Services, accessed 31 March 2008, <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea_justwait.html#asub>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Just Wait," Public Service Announcement," Mississippi Department of Human Services, accessed 31 March 2008, <<http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/video2.html>>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Home," Community Matters, Inc., (2006), accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://www.communitymattersinc.net/>>.

¹¹ "Rural Abstinence Partnership," Community Matters, Inc., (2006), accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://www.communitymattersinc.net/rap.htm>>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Community Matters, Inc., "The Abstinence Times," Spring/Summer 2007 Newsletter, accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://www.communitymattersinc.net/newsletters/cmi-%20NewsletterSpring-Summer-6-07.pdf>>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Peter. Bearman and Hannah. Brückner "Promising the Future: Virginity Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse." *American Journal of Sociology* 106.4 (2001): 859-912.; Peter. Bearman and Hannah. Brückner, "After the promise: The STD consequences of adolescent virginity pledges," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36.4 (2005): 271-278.

¹⁶ "About PHSC: Agency Experience," Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc., (2006-2007), accessed 20 March 2008, <<http://www.phsc-inc.com/index2.php?page=about>>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹⁹ 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](#).