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State Profile

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The Department of Human Services and community-based organizations in Mississippi received \$5,742,594 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2008.¹

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 for ninth through 12th grade students.

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 \$7,000,000 to HIV/AIDS-related services, including \$3,000,000 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 have established three programs. The state department of education would have been required to create a “Teen Pregnancy Prevention Pilot Program” for schools with the highest rates of teen pregnancy. The state department of health also would have been required to establish 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. Lastly, to the extent state funds are available, the bill would have required the state department of health to establish and implement an “Abstinence Education Pilot Program” that would follow the federal eight-point definition of “abstinence education.” The bill would also have allowed parents to remove their children from reproductive health education in any of these programs. The bill failed to move out of committee and died.

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.” House Bill 1625 appropriated \$6,000,000 to these efforts, including \$1,000,000 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. House Bill 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. 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.

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

- Mississippi received \$828,953 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 Mississippi, the match was met through in-kind services.
- The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) manages the state's Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding through the Mississippi Abstinence Education Program (MAEP). The department also receives CBAE monies.

- Mississippi did not distribute the federal funding to any sub-grantees for Fiscal Year 2008. Instead, the MDHS used the money to support a state-wide campaign for abstinence. The money went toward purchasing radio airtime for public service announcements and interviews to communicate the message of abstinence-until-marriage to teens, parents, schools, agencies, and youth leaders.

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

- There are seven CBAE grantees in Mississippi: one faith-based organization, two school districts, and four community-based organizations.
- There is one AFLA grantee in Mississippi: Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), Inc.

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

Community Matters, Inc., \$600,000 (CBAE 2007–2012)

Community Matters, Inc. describes itself as “a faith-inspired, community non-profit organization.”³ The organization runs the Rural Abstinence Partnership and is an affiliate partner of the Abstinence Clearinghouse. The Partnership conducts abstinence-only-until-marriage programming for young people ages 12–18 in four rural counties in central Mississippi.⁴ Community Matters was awarded a three-year CBAE grant in 2004 (which totaled \$2,352,681) and a second CBAE grant in 2007. Federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programming accounted for more than 80 percent of the organization’s total revenue during its 2006 fiscal year.⁵

Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc., \$600,000 (CBAE 2007–2012)

Partnership for a Healthy Scott County (PHSC), Inc. is a non-profit community development organization that specializes in providing substance abuse prevention and care services to residents of Scott, Newton, Leake, and Jasper counties. The organization operates the Scott County Families First Resource Center, which works with low-income families and at-risk individuals. The center provides services to young teens through its abstinence-only-until-marriage program in order “to reduce the number of adolescents who are at-risk of becoming pregnant or by [sic] receiving a sexually transmitted disease.” PHSC provides abstinence-only-until-marriage classes to middle school students in Scott County. The classes include health education, peer mentoring, parent involvement, and outreach services.⁶

Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc., \$600,000 (2006–2011)

Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. is a faith-based organization that operates the “STARS (Students Taking a Radical Stand)” abstinence program in Jackson, Mississippi. STARS encourages teens to take a “radical stand against all risky behavior, such as alcohol, drugs and pre-marital sexual activity [in order to] experience success in school and avoid the negative consequences associated with these activities.” The program “advances the message of abstinence-before-marriage as the only standard for adolescent behavior.”

STARS reaches youth 12–18 years of age in metro Jackson schools. The program emphasizes certain themes including, “A mutually faithful sexual relationship between husband and wife inside the marriage relationship is the expected standard of human sexuality,” and “Serious health risks result when youth become involved in sexual activities prior to marriage.”⁷ The program uses the *FACTS (Family Accountability Communicating Teen Sexuality)* abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula.

SIECUS reviewed the *FACTS* curricula and found that they provide incomplete and inaccurate medical information; present opinions and beliefs as universal truths; and portray a biased view of gender, marriage, family structure, sexual orientation, and pregnancy options. For example, *FACTS* includes the following list of negative consequences of premarital sex: “Pregnancy, financial aspect of fatherhood, abortion, HIV/AIDS, STDs, guilt, rejection, loss of reputation, inability to bond in the future, challenge to not compare future sexual partners, alienation from friends and family, poverty, and the inability to complete school.” *FACTS* also tells young people in no uncertain terms that life begins when sperm and egg meet: “At conception, the baby came into being. Even though he or she was only the size and appearance of a pencil dot, the baby was a separate, genetically unique individual.”⁸

The STARS website offers information for teens and parents on abstinence education. A document for teens titled, “Why Abstinence? How Abstinence?” lists reasons that adolescents choose to become sexually active:

- to escape from a bad home situation
- peer pressure
- media pressure, magazines, TV, videos, movies, internet
- internal pressure to identify with a peer group
- drugs/alcohol use
- boredom
- desire for intimacy—can you think of any other ways to develop intimacy?⁹

These messages suggest that the decision to become sexually active outside of marriage is always based on negative influences and unsound reasoning. Such messages undermine young people’s confidence in their own ability to make informed decisions.

Redemption Outreach Ministries International is connected to the larger abstinence-only-until-marriage movement. The organization offers a link to the Parents for Truth video commercial on the STARS website. The Parents for Truth campaign is run by the National Abstinence Education Association (NAEA), the lobbying arm of the abstinence-only-until-marriage industry. Its mission reads, “The NAEA exists to serve, support and represent individuals and organizations in the practice of abstinence education.”¹⁰ Since its inception, the NAEA has undertaken a number of media campaigns that use fear and misinformation in an attempt to discredit comprehensive sexuality education.

The Parents for Truth campaign aims to “challenge the distortions and misrepresentations of abstinence education critics and the media.” However, in reality, the campaign uses scare tactics to mislead parents about the content and purpose of comprehensive sexuality education. The commercial featured on the STARS website shows a parent react in horror when she learns that her child is receiving comprehensive sex education in school. “This is what they call comprehensive sex education?” exclaims the parent in the video. “They’re trying to teach my kid *how* to have sex.” The truth is that comprehensive sexuality education programs offer vital information to students about sexual health risks, including HIV/AIDS and STDs, safe sexual practices, and the effectiveness of proper condom use.

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), Inc., \$589,258 (CBAE 2007–2012) and \$260,633 (AFLA 2007–2012)

Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides services to underprivileged and at-risk youth in the Coahoma, Panola, Quitman, and Tallahatchie counties of the Mississippi Delta. The program aims “to provide positive life options to underprivileged youth and their families through a diverse array of services that will empower participants to become self-sufficient, productive citizens.”¹¹ Its services include GED and SAT/ACT prep; alternative education; employability

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and job skills training; pregnancy prevention; recreation; drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention; and cultural enhancement. Federal grants for abstinence programming accounted for 75 percent of the organization’s total revenue during the 2006 fiscal year.¹²

YOU uses *Choosing the Best* abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula. The *Choosing the Best* series is one of the most 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.”¹³

The organization’s CBAE grant supports its “MADAME (Making Alternative Decisions and Modeling Excellence) Butterfly” abstinence-only-until marriage program, which targets high-risk, pre-teen and teenage girls. The program is designed to “empower African American girls to make healthy life choices and embrace a life style [sic] of abstinence.”¹⁴ The MADAME Butterfly program also organizes social outings and activities for participants. The program partners with local Christian churches to create MADAME Butterfly Clubs in which the young women are paired with mentors from the congregation. The program also sponsors “Daddy Dates” during which program participants go on dates with their fathers or another important male figure and the man models “how to properly treat a lady.” In addition, MADAME Butterfly hosts a beauty pageant for program participants.¹⁵

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)
Mississippi Department of Human Services DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2012 www.mdhs.state.ms.us	\$828,953 federal \$599,800	Title V CBAE
Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast 2005–2008 www.bgccgulfcoast.org	\$682,520	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)
Community Matters, Inc. 2007–2012	\$600,000	CBAE
Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc. 2007–2012	\$600,000	CBAE
Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. 2006–2011 www.romi-inc.org	\$600,000	CBAE
Shaw School District 2006–2011 www.shawschools.k12.ms.us	\$600,000	CBAE
Starkville School District 2005–2008	\$381,430	CBAE
Youth Opportunities Unlimited 2004–2009 DUAL GRANTEE 2007–2012 www.msdelatyou.org	\$589,258 \$260,633	CBAE AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact¹⁶

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 Division of Economic Assistance/MAEP
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Mississippi Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

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

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

Planned Parenthood of Alabama, Inc.
6111 Highway 49, Suite 119
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Phone: (601) 261-0115
www.ppalabama.org

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.msolicy.org

Newspapers in Mississippi¹⁷

The Clarion-Ledger
Newsroom
201 S. Congress Street.
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 Street
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

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

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

Rankin Ledger
Newsroom
2001 Airport Road, Suite 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 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 "Community Matters, Inc.," Community Matters Inc. (2006), accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://www.communitymattersinc.net/index2.htm>>.

⁴ "Rural Abstinence Partnership," Community Matters, Inc. (2006), accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://www.communitymattersinc.net/rap.htm>>.

⁵ Communities Matter, Inc., IRS Form 990, 2006, p. 1.

⁶ "About PHSC," Partnership for a Healthy Scott County, Inc. (2006-2007), accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://www.phsc-inc.com/index2.php?page=about>>.

⁷ "Parent Resources," Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. (2008), accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://www.romi-inc.org/?id=35>>.

⁸ Rose Fuller et al., *FACTS and Reason* (Portland, OR: Northwest Family Services, 2000); Rose Fuller, et al., *I'm in Charge of the FACTS* (Portland, OR: Northwest Family Services, 2000). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *FACTS* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

⁹ "Why Abstinence-How Abstinence," Redemption Outreach Ministries International, Inc. (2008), accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://romi-inc.org/edit/assets/AOPWhyAbstinence.pdf>>.

¹⁰ "About Us," National Abstinence Education Association, accessed 10 October 2008, <http://www.abstinenceassociation.org/about_us/index.html>.

¹¹ "Vision," Youth Opportunities Unlimited, accessed 17 October 2008, <<http://www.msdelatayou.org/>>.

¹² Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., IRS Form 990, 2006, p. 1.

¹³ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best, Inc., 2001-2007).

¹⁴ Youth Opportunities International, Inc., Community Based Abstinence Education application, Fiscal Year 2007, p. 10

¹⁵ Youth Opportunities International, Inc., Community Based Abstinence Education application, Fiscal Year 2007, p. 10.

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¹⁶ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹⁷ 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](#).