



Massachusetts

Massachusetts received \$1,666,676 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2003.¹

Massachusetts Sexuality Education Law

Massachusetts does not require sexuality education and instead allows local school boards to make such decisions.

If a community decides to implement sexuality education, it must develop standards with the guidance of community stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, counseling professionals, health professionals, representatives of local religious groups, and representatives of local social service and health agencies. In addition, the program must be taught in grades kindergarten through 12 and must discuss HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, family violence, and sound health practices.

The school district must also ensure that parents and/or guardians receive notification about the sexuality education policy. Parents then have the option to exempt their children from any or all of this instruction. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See General Laws of Massachusetts, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 1 and Section 32A

Recent Legislation

The Massachusetts legislature carried bills over from the 2003 to the 2004 session. Massachusetts’ legislature meets throughout the year.

Health Education Requirement

House Bill 1258 and Senate Bill 295, both introduced in January 2003, would require that health education be taught in grades kindergarten through 12 by adding the requirement to the state’s core curriculum. The definition of “health education” comes from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Education Framework and includes information on topics such as nutrition, physical activity, mental health, safety and injury prevention, reproduction and sexuality, substance abuse, violence prevention, and consumer health.

Another bill, House Bill 2037, contains the same language as the above bills. HB 2037 also includes language on other instruction to be included on topics such as history, AIDS education, and violence prevention, among others, and specifically gives the board the authority to include the “teaching of family life skills.”

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.

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A hearing on all three bills was held on September 18, 2003 and all three bills were “set aside” in March 2004. They are not expected to move again.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Requirement

Senate Bill 293, House Bill 1847, and House Bill 2753 would include HIV/AIDS prevention education in the health education curriculum of all public schools. All three bills were introduced on January 1, 2003 and are in committee.

A hearing on all three bills was held on September 18 and all three bills were “set aside” in March 2004. They are not expected to move again.

Community-Based Health and Sexuality Education Services

House Bill 1867 and Senate Bill 550, both introduced in January 2003, would require the state to establish community-based health and sexuality education services provided by comprehensive family planning agencies.

A hearing was held on July 16, 2003 for both bills and they came out of the Joint Committee on Health Care on February 4, 2004. At press time, the bills are in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Health Educational Curriculum Committee Requirement

House Bill 323, filed in December 2002 and in committee since January 1, 2003, would require every public school district to establish a Health Educational Curriculum Committee to “research and make recommendations on a comprehensive, age appropriate, factually and medically accurate health education curriculum for grades k-12.” The bill also contains provisions relating to parental notification and parental opt-out policies.

A hearing was held on September 18, 2003 and the bill was “set aside.” It is not expected to move again.

Bills Requiring Parental Notification for Sexuality Education

House Bills 1445 and 2757, both introduced in January 2003, would require that any school with a sexuality education program have a written policy on parental/guardian notification of the program. All such programs would also have to be non-mandatory elective courses and parents would have to give written permission, or permission by a method similar to those used for other elective courses, for their children to participate.

A hearing was held on September 18, 2003 and the bills were “set aside.” They are not expected to move again.

Bill Establishing Pregnancy Prevention Program Based on Unwed Mothers

House Bill 1115, for which a hearing was scheduled in April 2003, would direct several departments to hire, train, and prepare unwed mothers who have received certain aid to take part in a pilot program for girls and/or boys to “educate them as to the adverse social and economic consequences of being an unwed mother.” The bill also establishes an evaluation component for different types of pregnancy prevention programs.

The bill came out of committee in February 2004 and, at press time, is in the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Recent Events

Condom Availability in Massachusetts Schools Found to Have Positive Effect

In a study published in the June 2003 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, researchers from the George Washington University School of Public Health and Human Service, the Academy for Educational Development, and the Massachusetts Department of Health determined that condom availability programs in schools can have a positive impact on young people's sexual behaviors.

According to a summary of the report, the researchers concluded that "the strategy of making condoms available, an indication of socio-environmental support for condom use, may improve HIV prevention practices." They found that students who attended schools where condoms were available were less likely to be sexually active and more likely to use condoms if they were sexually active. Approximately 21 percent of students surveyed attended schools where condoms were available.

"Condom availability was not associated with greater sexual activity among adolescents but was associated with greater condom use among those who were already sexually active, a highly positive result," said lead researcher, Susan M. Blake Ph.D., of the Department of Prevention and Community Health at George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. "Concerns expressed by those who think that promoting condom use encourages sexual activity among non-sexually active adolescents were not substantiated by this study."

There was no difference in pregnancy rates between youth who attended schools with a condom availability program and those who did not. Researchers noted that this may be because youth in schools without condoms were more likely to use other forms of contraception. Twenty-five percent of sexually active youth in schools without condom availability programs used other forms of contraception compared to 13 percent of youth in schools where condoms were available.

The researchers used the results of the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study (YRBSS) from 1995, which included interviews from 4,166 students. The YRBSS was taken four years after the Massachusetts Department of Health recommended that school districts develop condom availability programs. Massachusetts is the only state with such a policy, according to Ms. Blake.

To see a summary of the *American Journal of Public Health* report, see
<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/93/6/955>.

Massachusetts' Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- In 2003, 41% of female high school students and 41% of male high school students in Massachusetts reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 2% of female high school students and 8% of male high school students in Massachusetts reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.

² Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: J. Grunbaum, et. al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2003," *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 53, no. SS-2, May 21, 2004, pp. 1-95. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>.

- In 2003, 9% of female high school students and 11% of male high school students in Massachusetts reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 11% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 31% of female high school students and 28% of male high school students in Massachusetts reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 18% of females and 33% of males in Massachusetts reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 30% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 55% of females and 60% of males in Massachusetts reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 57% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 26% of females and 20% of males in Massachusetts reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 13% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, 4% of female high school students and 3% of male high school students in Massachusetts 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 2003, 92% of high school students in Massachusetts reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Massachusetts' abortion rate was 26 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.³
- In 2001, Massachusetts' birth rate was 25 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 45 per 1,000 nationwide.⁴

Boston, Massachusetts' Youth: Statistical Information of Note

- In 2003, 48% of female high school students and 60% of male high school students in Boston reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 4% of female high school students and 19% of male high school students in Boston reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.

³ 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.

⁴ A. Papillo, et.al., *Facts at a Glance*, (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February, 2004).

- In 2003, 14% of female high school students and 29% of male high school students in Boston reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 11% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 34% of female high school students and 37% of male high school students in Boston reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 17% of females and 28% of males in Boston reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 30% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 55% of females and 74% of males in Boston reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 57% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 20% of females and 12% of males in Boston reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 13% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, 9% of female high school students and 6% of male high school students in Boston 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 2003, 85% of high school students in Boston reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Massachusetts received \$739,000 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. Massachusetts matches every four dollars of federal funds with three dollars from state funds. The state does not contract out this money. Instead, the Massachusetts Department of Health uses this money to run a media campaign with the main message of "You don't have to do it." The targets for this media campaign are males and females ten to 14 years of age, males 15-17 years of age, and parents of teenagers. The goals of this campaign are to increase parent-child communication, encourage youth to delay the onset of sexual activity, and educate young men about the risks of early sexual activity. An evaluation of this campaign is ongoing.

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

There are two SPRANS—CBAE grantees in Massachusetts: Catholic Social Services of Fall River and A Woman's Concern with locations throughout Massachusetts. There is one AFLA grantee in Massachusetts: Boston Medical Center.

A Woman's Concern runs several crisis pregnancy centers that uses misleading information to pressure women into choosing not to have abortions. Before receiving this grant, A Woman's

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Concern's abstinence-only-until-marriage program was privately funded by the Gerard Health Foundation. Ray Neary, director of education for the Gerard Health Foundation and former director of Massachusetts Citizens for Life, told *Massachusetts News* that his job was to introduce abstinence-only-until-marriage programs to Massachusetts schools and "help rid the state of those sex education courses that really promote unbridled sex."⁵

Although the abstinence-only-until-marriage program that A Woman's Concern currently offers is free to schools, few Massachusetts schools have elected to use their program. This program, entitled *Healthy Futures - Boston*, offers free trainings and assemblies based on *A.C. Green's Game Plan* curriculum. SIECUS' review of this curriculum has found it to be fear- and shame-based, present inaccurate information about sexually transmitted diseases and condoms, and assume that all students in the class are heterosexual.

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Massachusetts Department of Health www.mass.gov/dph/fch/abstinence.htm	\$739,000 federal	Title V
Catholic Social Services of Fall River 2002-2003 DUAL GRANTEE 2003 – 2006	\$100,000 \$124,198	SPRANS-CBAE (Planning Grant) SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
A Women's Concern, Inc. www.awomansconcern.org 2003 - 2006	\$488,434	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Boston Medical Center 2002-2003	\$215,044	AFLA

⁵ "Ray Neary Hired to Fight for Abstinence Education," *Massachusetts News*, October 10, 2003. Available online at http://www.massnews.com/2002_editions/Print_editions/10_Oct/1002_mn_sightings.shtml#3.

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Massachusetts Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian
Political Caucus
P.O. Box 246
State House
Boston, MA 02133
Phone: (617) 262-1565
www.mglpc.org

Planned Parenthood League of
Massachusetts
1055 Commonwealth Ave
Boston, MA 02215-1001
Phone: (617) 616-1660
www.pplm.org

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
of Massachusetts
P.O. Box 1129
Brookline, MA 02446
Phone: (617) 522-2964
www.rcrcofma.org

Massachusetts NOW
214 Harvard Ave.
Boston, MA 02134
Phone: (617) 232-1017

The Political Alliance
P.O. Box 1244
Northampton, MA 61060
www.wmassalliance.org

Massachusetts Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

MA Family Institute
381 Elliot St.
Newton, MA 02464
Phone: (617) 928-0800

Operation Rescue Boston
P.O. Box 870037
Milton Village, MA 02187
Phone: (781) 849-6026

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MA Citizens for Life
The Schrafft Center
529 Main St.
Boston, MA 02129
Phone: (617) 242-4199

Newspapers in Massachusetts

Boston Herald
Michael Lasalandra
Medical/Health Writer
300 Harrison Ave.
Boston, MA 02118
Phone: (617) 619-6613

Boston Globe
Scott Allen
Medical/Health Editor
135 William T. Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125
Phone: (617) 929-3112

Boston Globe
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Family/Parenting Columnist
135 William T. Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125
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Elementary Education Reporter
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