



## MASSACHUSETTS

*Massachusetts received \$1,561,458 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.<sup>1</sup>*

### 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 kindergarten through twelfth grade 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 may 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

SIECUS is not aware of any recent legislation related to sexuality education in Massachusetts.

### Events of Note

#### *Condom Distribution Program Comes Under Fire*

*October 2004; Holyoke, MA*

The Holyoke, Massachusetts school system came under fire from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield for a recent decision to institute a program to distribute condoms to sixth through twelfth grade students.

The school committee decided to adopt the program in an effort to curb the city’s high teen birth rates of 82 births per 1,000 teen girls. This is the highest in the state which has a rate of 23 births per 1,000 teen girls.<sup>2</sup> In an effort to reduce this, the school committee voted to revise its health education curriculum and give sex education a higher priority. More recently, the school decided to institute the condom distribution program.

The program will be piloted in the high schools and will be extended to sixth through eighth grade if it is deemed successful. Students wishing to receive condoms will need to speak to a nurse who will explain pregnancy, AIDS, abstinence, and that condoms are not 100 % effective.

A letter was sent home to parents, who will have the option of preventing their children from obtaining condoms. A school physician and interim director of health education for the Holyoke schools described the need for the program and said, “we had to do something to combat what we were seeing.”<sup>3</sup>

Not everyone agrees with the school’s new program, however. Several members of the school committee voiced opposition and voted to limit the program. The latest opposition comes from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield, who argued that that the school system is “an endorser and an enabler of early adolescent sex.”<sup>4</sup> In a statement, he said, “I am profoundly disappointed and disturbed” and that school officials are reducing sex to “meaningless self-gratification.”<sup>5</sup> Despite the opposition, the school intends to go forward with the program.

*Condom Availability in Massachusetts Schools Found to Have Positive Effect*  
June 2003

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.

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% of students surveyed attended schools where condoms were available. Researchers concluded that “the strategy of making condoms available, an indication of socio-environmental support for condom use, may improve HIV prevention practices.”

“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.”<sup>6</sup>

There was no difference, however, 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% 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.<sup>7</sup>

**Massachusetts’ Youth: Statistical Information of Note<sup>8</sup>**

- 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.

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- 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.
- 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 HIV/AIDS 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.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2002, Massachusetts' birth rate was 23 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.<sup>10</sup>

### *Boston, Massachusetts*

- 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.

- 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 HIV/AIDS 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 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 Massachusetts, the match is provided by television and radio stations through the donation of air time.

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.” This media campaign targets males and females ages 10-14, males ages 15-17, 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)<sup>11</sup> and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees**

There are two SPRANS—CBAE grantees in Massachusetts: Catholic Social Services of Fall River and A Women’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 use misleading information to pressure women into choosing not to have abortions. Before receiving this grant, A Woman’s 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.”<sup>12</sup>

Although A Woman’s Concern currently offers its abstinence-only-until-marriage program 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 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 (Sexually Transmitted Disease). 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.”<sup>13</sup>

**Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2004**

<b>Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee</b> <b>Length of Grant</b>	<b>Amount of Grant</b>	<b>Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)</b>
Massachusetts Department of Health  <a href="http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/abstinence.htm">www.mass.gov/dph/fch/abstinence.htm</a>	\$739,000 federal	Title V
Catholic Social Services of Fall River  2003 – 2006	\$124,198	SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation Grant)
A Women’s Concern, Inc.  <a href="http://www.awomansconcern.org">www.awomansconcern.org</a>  2003 - 2006	\$488,434	SPRANS–CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Boston Medical Center 2004-2005	\$209,826	AFLA

**Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator**

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**Massachusetts Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

AIDS Action Committee of  
Massachusetts  
294 Washington St., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
Phone: (617) 437-6200  
[www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org)

Greater Boston NOW  
14 Linden St., Suite 220  
Allston, MA 02134  
Phone: (617) 254-9130  
[bostonnow.site.yahoo.net](http://bostonnow.site.yahoo.net)

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen  
Pregnancy  
105 Chauncy St., 8th Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
Phone: (617) 482-9122

Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian  
Political Caucus  
PO Box 246  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133  
Phone: (617) 262-1565  
[www.mglpc.org](http://www.mglpc.org)

NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts  
41 Winter St., Suite 65  
Boston, MA 02108  
Phone: (617) 556-8800  
[www.prochoicemass.org](http://www.prochoicemass.org)

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

The Political Alliance  
PO Box 1244  
Northampton, MA 01060  
[www.wmassalliance.org](http://www.wmassalliance.org)

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
of Massachusetts  
PO Box 1129  
Brookline, MA 02446  
Phone: (617) 522-2964  
[www.rcrcofma.org](http://www.rcrcofma.org)

**Massachusetts Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

MA Family Institute  
381 Elliot St.  
Newton, MA 02464  
Phone: (617) 928-0800  
[www.mafamily.org](http://www.mafamily.org)

Operation Rescue Boston  
PO Box 870037  
Milton Village, MA 02187  
Phone: (781) 849-6026  
[www.orboston.org](http://www.orboston.org)

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

**Newspapers in Massachusetts**

*Boston Globe*  
Beth Daley  
Health & Medicine Reporter  
PO Box 55819  
Boston, MA 02205  
Phone: (617) 929-3043

*Boston Globe*  
Gideon Gil  
Health & Medicine Editor  
PO Box 55819  
Boston, MA 02205  
Phone: (617) 929-3242

*Boston Globe*  
Anne Kornblut  
White House Reporter  
1130 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 857-5112

*Boston Globe*  
Susan Milligan  
Congress Reporter  
1130 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 857-5143

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

*Boston Globe*  
Judy Foreman  
Health & Medicine Columnist  
4 Brattle St., Suite 301  
Cambridge, MA 21388  
Phone: (617) 234-4433

*Boston Globe*  
Carey Goldberg  
Health & Medicine Reporter  
PO Box 55819  
Boston, MA 02205  
Phone: (617) 929-3077

*Boston Globe*  
Barbara Meltz  
Family & Parenting Columnist  
PO Box 55819  
Boston, MA 02205  
Phone: (617) 929-3006

*Boston Globe*  
Michael Paulson  
Religion Editor  
PO Box 55819  
Boston, MA 02205  
Phone: (617) 929-3050

*The Patriot Ledger*  
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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> “N.E. Editorial Roundup,” *The Associated Press*, 9 October 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, on 26 November 2004.

<sup>3</sup> David Abel, “Bishop Attacks School Condom Plan,” *Boston Globe*, 26 October 2004, accessed 26 November 2004, <[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/10/26/bishop\\_attacks\\_school\\_condom\\_plan/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/10/26/bishop_attacks_school_condom_plan/)>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Susan M. Blake et al, “Condom Availability Programs in Massachusetts High Schools: Relationships With Condom Use and Sexual Behavior” *American Journal of Public Health* 93:6 (June 2003): 955-962, accessed 18 February 2005, <<http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/93/6/955>>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: Jo Anne Grunbaum, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2003,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 53.SS-2 (21 May 2004): 1-95, accessed 28 January 2005, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>>.

<sup>9</sup> *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](http://www.guttmacher.org)>.

<sup>10</sup> *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>>.

<sup>11</sup> 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).

<sup>12</sup> “Ray Neary Hired to Fight for Abstinence Education,” *Massachusetts News*, 10 October 2003, accessed 9 February 2005, <[http://www.massnews.com/2002\\_editions/Print\\_editions/10\\_Oct/1002\\_mn\\_sightings.shtml#3](http://www.massnews.com/2002_editions/Print_editions/10_Oct/1002_mn_sightings.shtml#3)>.

<sup>13</sup> Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A.C. Green’s Game Plan* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2001), 45.