



MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi received \$4,788,874 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2005.¹

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 the prevention of STDs, including HIV for ninth through twelfth grades.

Local school boards must authorize sexuality education instruction and each school must be in compliance with local regulations. 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.” Each school board must also appoint a health education council that makes recommendations for health education curriculum.

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 sexuality education law also dictates that if homosexuality is taught, it must be presented as “unnatural and dangerous” and be discussed within the context of Mississippi’s law outlawing sodomy.²

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, 41-79-5, and *Comprehensive Health Framework*.

Recent Legislation

Legislation Would Implement “Abstinence Education and Fetal Awareness Education Program” Senate Bill 2716 and House Bill 1465 would require all public school districts to include “abstinence education and the human development of the unborn fetus as a required component of every high school health education class.” Among other purposes, this class would “create a

culture of life by providing a window to the womb.” The State Department of Health would be responsible for developing this program and may contract with a nonprofit organization to implement the program. In addition, public school nurses would be prohibited from “providing abortion counseling to any student or referring any student to abortion counseling or abortion clinics.” If a school nurse violates this section, the school district will not be able to receive any state administered funds.

SB 2716 was introduced in January 2006 and assigned to the House Committee on Public Health and Human Services as well as the Committee on Education. Both committees as well as the Senate have passed it. It currently resides in the House Committee on Education as well as the House Committee on Public Health and Human Services. HB 1465 was introduced in January 2006 and assigned to the House Committee on Education, where it died.

Legislation Would Require Parental Opt-In for Sex Education, Limit Information Collected from Students

Senate Bill 2544, titled the “Student and Family Privacy Protection Act,” was introduced in January 2006 into the Committee on Education where it died. If passed, this bill would have required parental permission in order for students to be allowed to participate in any survey or evaluation that asks about their sexual attitudes, beliefs, or behavior. Students would also need parental or guardian permission to participate in health or sexuality education; this is commonly referred to as an “opt-in” policy.

Bill Would Require Parental Consent for Sex and Health Education and Prohibit Gathering Information from Students without Parental Consent

Senate Bill 2113 would have prohibited school districts from requiring students to participate in “any survey, questionnaire, analysis, or evaluation” that focuses on certain subjects, including sexual attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors without prior parental consent. SB 2113 was introduced in January 2004 and referred to Senate Committee on Education where it died. If the legislation had been enacted, it would also have required parental consent for a student to participate in sex or health education. SB 2113 varied slightly from SB 2544 which was introduced in January 2006 and also died in committee.

Events of Note

Strict Laws Limit Abortions in Mississippi

January 2005; Jackson, MS

Jackson Women’s Health Organization is the last remaining abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi, and if anti-choice protesters have their way, it too will shut its doors. At one point, the state had seven clinics, but slowly each has been closed. Although *Roe v. Wade* secures women’s rights to choose to terminate a pregnancy, the lack of access to services precludes many women in Mississippi from exercising this right.

The Jackson clinic is located squarely in the Bible Belt in a state where an overwhelming majority of elected officials are anti-choice. For example, the state’s Governor, Haley Barbour, issued an official proclamation designating the seven days leading up to the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* as “a week of prayer regarding the sanctity of human life.”³ According to the same proclamation, Barbour also ordered the placement of small white crosses on the lawn of the State Capital “in memory of the unborn children who die each day in America.”⁴

Susan Hill, the owner of the Jackson clinic, explained, “Mississippi is the picture of the future.”⁵ Mississippi has some of the harshest abortion restrictions in the country. For example, it has one of the most sweeping conscience clauses in the country, allowing any health care provider to refuse to provide any abortion-related service. The state’s laws also require women to wait at least 24 hours after an initial consultation with a doctor before having an abortion. Mississippi is also one of only two states that require the written consent of both parents before a minor can obtain an abortion, though a judicial bypass option is available.

For the 98% of Mississippi women who live in a county without an abortion provider, it is almost as if *Roe v. Wade* were not still in existence. Hill, who was a social worker before *Roe*, explained, “Mississippi is like the rest of the country was before 1973.” She said that the women who arrive at her clinic “have that same look in the eye now. They have to go through the same kind of struggles.”⁶

She is determined to keep the clinic open no matter what: “the state and the protesters are determined to close us and we’re determined to stay open. It’s the classic fight to the finish.”⁷

Mississippi’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁸

- In 2003, 58% of female high school students and 64% of male high school students in Mississippi reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 5% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students in Mississippi 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 2003, 15% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students in Mississippi 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, 47% of female high school students and 46% 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 35% of female high school students and 34% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 12% of females and 26% of males in Mississippi reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of female high school students and 30% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 60% of females and 72% of males in Mississippi 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 9% of males in Mississippi 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, 8% of female high school students and 7% of male high school students in Mississippi 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, 87% of high school students in Mississippi reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Mississippi's abortion rate was 16 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁹
- In 2002, Mississippi's birth rate was 65 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁰

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Mississippi received \$846,680 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2005. 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 state provides \$665,248 in state funds for the match. The funding is controlled by the Mississippi Department of Health, Office of Personal Health Services, Bureau of Child Health.

The Department of Health funds 13 sub-grantees. Funded programs must target young people ages 10–19, place a special emphasis on youth at high-risk for pregnancy, and follow all eight points of the federal definition of “abstinence education.” Sub-grantees must also demonstrate that parents and communities are involved with their abstinence-only-until-marriage program. Sub-grantees use a variety of curricula, including: *Smart Moves*, *Sex Can Wait*, *RSVP*, *RISE*, *Choosing the Best*, *Sex Respect*, and locally developed programs.

SIECUS reviewed two of the curricula produced by Choosing the Best, Inc.—*Choosing the Best LIFE* (for high school students) and *Choosing the Best Path* (for middle school students). These reviews found that the curricula name numerous negative consequences of premarital sexual activity and suggest that teens should feel guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed of sexual behavior. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states that, “relationships often lower the self-respect of both partners—one feeling used, the other feeling like the user. Emotional pain can cause a downward spiral leading to intense feelings of lack of worthlessness.” *Choosing the Best PATH* says, “sexual activity also can lead to the trashing of a person’s reputation, resulting in the loss of friends.”¹¹

SIECUS reviewed *Sex Respect* and found that the curriculum relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage, sexual orientation, and family structure. According to *Sex Respect*, “there is no way to have premarital sex without hurting someone.” *Sex Respect* implies that young people who become sexually active lack values, self-esteem, and principles: “Many young teens who have been brought up with principles and values

may have already decided they want to save sex for marriage.” The curriculum is also not appropriate for public schools, as it remains patently religious. For example, *Sex Respect* uses Biblical language in giving young people dating advice: “Set ending time for your date before you go out. Be home on time. Don’t invite your date in. Lead yourselves not into temptation.”¹²

There is no long-term evaluation of these programs. Rather, Department of Health staff members make unannounced site visits to each of the sub-grantees. During these visits, staff members check to make sure that the sub-grantees are following each of the eight points of the definition of “abstinence education.” The Mississippi Department of Health also provides technical assistance to sub-grantees.

The state’s initial Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding was used to create the *Just Wait* campaign. This campaign provides technical support for communities looking to implement abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.¹³

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE)¹⁴ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are six CBAE grantees in Mississippi: Booneville School District, Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast, Community Matters, Inc., Mississippi Community Development Corporation, the Mississippi Community Education Center, and Starkville School District. There is one AFLA grantee in Mississippi: Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

The Mississippi Community Development Corporation receives an \$800,000 abstinence-only-until-marriage grant. Its program, *Abstinence The Best Choice*, focuses on young people ages 12–19 and uses the following curricula: *Responsible Social Value Program (RSVP)*, *You are Unique*, and *Responsibility Integrity Self-Control and Empowerment (R.I.S.E)*.

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2005

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Mississippi Department of Health www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/index.cfm/32,0,170,103.html	\$846,680 federal \$665,248 state	Title V
Boys and Girls Club of the Gulf Coast DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2008	\$56,000 \$682,520	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
Combined Human Support Services	\$70,496	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Length of Grant		
Downtown Jackson Community Development Corporation	\$79,429	Title V sub-grantee
Lawrence County School District	\$80,000	Title V sub-grantee
Mississippi Community Development Corporation	\$64,000	Title V sub-grantee
DUAL GRANTEE 2004–2007	\$800,000	CBAE
MSU – Green County Extension Service	\$27,405	Title V sub-grantee
P.E.A.R.S.O.N. Foundation	\$33,563	Title V sub-grantee
Poplarville School District	\$79,200	Title V sub-grantee
Positive Living Using Sports, Inc	\$51,746	Title V sub-grantee
Sav-A-Life of Armory	\$39,994	Title V sub-grantee
South MS Abstinence Education Program	\$75,816	Title V sub-grantee
Youth Alive/Alive Jones County	\$79,979	Title V sub-grantee
Youth Opportunities Unlimited	\$43,896	Title V sub-grantee
DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2006	\$260,633	AFLA
Booneville School District 2004–2007 www.booneville.k12.ms.us	\$282,784	CBAE

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Community Matters Inc. 2004–2007	\$784,227	CBAE
The Mississippi Community Education Center 2004–2007	\$750,600	CBAE
Starkville School District 2005–2008	\$381,430	CBAE

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

Sebrenia Robinson
Mississippi State Department of Health
Abstinence Education Program
570 East Woodrow Wilson
PO Box 1700
Jackson, MS 39215
Phone: (601) 576-7469

Mississippi Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

Equality Mississippi
PO Box 6021
Jackson, MS 39288
Phone: (601) 936-7673
www.equalityms.org

Mississippi Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

American Family Association
PO Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803
Phone: (662) 844-5036
www.afa.net

Mississippi Family Council
PO Box 13514
Jackson, MS 39236
Phone: (601) 969-1200
www.msfamily.org

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Newspapers in Mississippi

The Clarion-Ledger
Pam Berry
Health & Medicine Editor
201 S. Congress St.
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: (601) 961-7264

The Clarion-Ledger
Ruth Ingram
Education Editor
201 S. Congress St.
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: (601) 961-7263

Commercial Dispatch
Sue Lynn Miller
Education Reporter
516 Main St.
Columbus, MS 39701
Phone: (662) 328-2471

Delta Democrat Times
Education Editor
988 N. Broadway St.
Greenville, MS 38701
Phone: (662) 335-1155

Enterprise-Journal
Education Editor
112 Oliver Emmerich Dr.
McComb, MS 39648
Phone: (601) 684-2421

Hattiesburg American
Ruben Mees
Education Reporter
825 N. Main St.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Phone: (601) 584-3025

Meridian Star
Education Editor
814 22nd Ave.
Meridian, MS 39301
Phone: (601) 693-1551

Mississippi Press
Beverly Tuskan
Medical/Health Editor
1225 Jackson Ave.
Pascagoula, MS 39567
Phone: (228) 934-1442

Mississippi Press
Education Editor
1225 Jackson Ave.
Pascagoula, MS 39567
Phone: (228) 762-0033

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal
Michaela Gibson Morris
Medical/Health Reporter
1655 S. Green St.
Tupelo, MS 38804
Phone: (662) 678-1599

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal
Mack Spencer
Education Reporter
1655 S. Green St.
Tupelo, MS 38804
Phone: (662) 678-1582

Rankin Ledger
Education Editor
2001 Airport Rd. N
Flowood, MS 39232
Phone: (601) 360-4600

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Sun Herald

Melissa Scallan
Education Reporter
205 Debuys Rd.
Gulfport, MS 39507
Phone: (228) 896-0541

Vicksburg Post

Lockland Fields
Education Editor
1601-F N. Frontage Rd.
Vicksburg, MS 39180
Phone: (601) 636-4545

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 2005 begins on October 1, 2004 and ends on September 30, 2005.

² In 2003, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which declared state laws criminalizing homosexual behavior to be unconstitutional.

³ Sharon Lerner, "Post-Roe Postcard," *The Nation*, 7 February 2005, accessed 25 January 2005, <<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20050207&s=lerner>>; Governor Haley Barbour, "A Proclamation," January 2005, accessed 25 January 2005 <<http://www.governorbarbour.com/ProcProLife.htm>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ David Crary, "Mississippi Tries Everything to Curb Abortions," *Houston Chronicle*, 27 December 2004, A10.

⁶ Associated Press, "Mississippi: Window into future of abortion debate," *CNN.com*, 28 December 2004, accessed 1 January 2005, <www.cnn.com>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 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/>>. Mississippi did not participate in the 2005 YRBS.

⁹ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed January 28, 2005, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/state_pregnancy_trends.pdf>.

¹⁰ *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>>.

¹¹ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000); Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best PATH* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000). For more information, see SIECUS' reviews of *Choosing the Best LIFE* and *Choosing the Best PATH* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

¹² Coleen Kelly Mast, *Sex Respect: The Option for True Sexual Freedom* (Bradley, IL: Sex Respect, 2001). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Sex Respect* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.htm>.

¹³ *Division of Economic Assistance "Just Wait" Abstinence Unit*, Mississippi Department of Human Services, accessed 13 January 2006, <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/ea_justwait.html>.

¹⁴ In Fiscal Year 2004 SPRANS—CBAE was administered within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. In Fiscal Year 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).