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Mississippi received \$3,724,924 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Mississippi Sexuality Education Law

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.

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.”

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.

Recent Legislation

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

Events of Note

Strict Laws Limit Abortions in Mississippi

January 2005; Jackson, MS

Jackson Women’s Health Organization is the last abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi, and if anti-choice protesters have their way, it too will shut its doors. The state had seven clinics, but slowly each has been closed. *Roe v. Wade* secures women’s rights to choose to terminate a pregnancy but 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 in which 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. It's the perfect laboratory for any restriction [on abortion]—there's no way, politically, that it won't sail through the legislature."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 which require the written consent of both parents before a minor can obtain an abortion, though a judicial bypass option is available.

Anti-choice activists hail Mississippi's policies. Pat Cartrette, the executive director of Pro-Life Mississippi, a Christian anti-choice group in the state, says that her group no longer advocates for restrictive abortion policies because all of their priorities have been enacted by the state. Instead, the group is focusing their efforts on closing down the last remaining abortion clinic. She explained, "we don't need to wait for the Supreme Court to outlaw abortion... If we shine the light on the abortionists and the abortion industry, it will self-destruct, and we're seeing that happen in Mississippi."⁶

Anti-choice protesters are pleased that there is now only one clinic left in the state. Roy McMillan, who has been protesting outside Mississippi clinics for 25 years, said, "thankfully we've arrived at a time I always wanted—where the women have to come through us."⁷ He continued, "I would love our state to be the first to be abortion-free... The governor should send the Highway Patrol and the National Guard to close this clinic down."⁸ McMillan has been arrested more than 62 times and has been a controversial activist over the years. He has threatened violence against clinic staff and once said he was inspired by protesting with Paul Hill, an activist who later killed an abortion doctor.⁹

Despite constant harassment by anti-choice protesters, the Jackson Women's Health Organization continues to operate and see patients. Betty Thompson, a previous director of the clinic and now a consultant, said, "we're just going to have to fight each time... As long as we're in compliance with the laws, I think we'll be able to function."¹⁰ She said the restrictions are hard for the patients, particularly for low-income women who must find money both to pay for the procedure as well as to stay in the area overnight to fulfill the 24 hour waiting period requirement. Still, she says, "a young woman who's made up her mind to have an abortion will find a way to pay for it. She'll sell whatever she has at a pawn shop, steal, prostitute herself. She'll run in here—not walk, but run."¹¹

Women with the means to do so often travel outside of the state to access abortion services. Planned Parenthood does not operate a clinic in Mississippi, but instead monitors the state from a neighboring office in Alabama. The head of Planned Parenthood's Alabama office explained, "some Mississippi women drive across the state line to get abortions, but the poorest of the poor are either having the kids or getting a back-alley abortion. Some of these women probably end up getting sick and dying, though we'll never know because they don't put it on the death certificate."¹²

Many pro-choice activists are worried that what is happening in Mississippi is a glimpse of what may happen in the near future. “It’s the canary dying in the mine,” said Nancy Northrup, president of the Center for Reproductive Rights. “It’s what can happen if the constant strategy of chipping away at *Roe* is not met with sufficient push-back from the pro-choice movement,” she warned.¹³

For the 98 percent 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. Susan 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.”¹⁴

There are some in Mississippi, however, who are fighting back against the anti-choice protesters. The Mississippi affiliates of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Organization for Women (NOW) are starting an abortion-rights coalition which will work to challenge the anti-choice protesters as well as counter abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Mississippi schools.

Meanwhile, the clinic is determined to stay open no matter what. Susan Hill, the clinic owner, said, “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.”¹⁵

Mississippi’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note¹⁶

- 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 females and 34% of males 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 females and 30% of males 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.¹⁷
- 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.¹⁸

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Mississippi received \$846,680 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 Mississippi, the state provides \$665,248 of state funds. The money is controlled by the Mississippi Department of Health, Office of Personal Health Services, Bureau of Child Health.

The funding is given to 19 groups with grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Funded programs must target youth ages 10 to 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.

Seven of these sub-grantees are school districts, two are crisis pregnancy centers, and one is a church. One of the sub-grantees, the Clinton Public School District, states on the "Beliefs" section of its website that "Faith in God is the cornerstone of our community." Both crisis pregnancy centers are part of a chain of Christian-based crisis pregnancy centers. On this chain's website, it lists services that the centers offer:

- Confidential counseling from a Biblical perspective by trained volunteer counselors;
- Parenting program gives insight, suggestions and encouragement in raising children from a Biblical prospective; and
- Crisis intervention for those struggling with life's adversities—referrals, Biblical counseling, and intervention.¹⁹

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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 “abstinence education” as defined in Section 510 of the Social Security Act. 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.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)²⁰ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are four SPRANS–CBAE grantees in Mississippi: Booneville School District, Community Matters Inc, Mississippi Community Development Corporation, and the Mississippi Community Education Center. There is one AFLA grantee in Mississippi: Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

The Mississippi Community Development Corporation receives an \$800,000 abstinence-only-until-marriage grant. Their program, entitled *Abstinence The Best Choice*, focuses on youth 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 2004²¹

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, 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
Aaron E. Henry Community Health Center www.aehcommunityhealth.org		Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Booneville School District DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2007 www.booneville.k12.ms.us	\$282,784	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Boys & Girls Club of the Gulf Coast www.bgcgulfcoast.org		Title V sub-grantee
Clinton Public School District www2.mde.k12.ms.us		Title V sub-grantee
Combined Human Support Service		Title V sub-grantee
Downtown Jackson Community Development Center		Title V sub-grantee
Farris Hill M.B. Church		Title V sub-grantee
Greenwood Community Recreation Center		Title V sub-grantee
Lawrence County School District		Title V sub-grantee
LeFlore County School District http://schooltree.org/MS-LEFLORE.html		Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Mississippi Community Development Corporation DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2007	\$800,000	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
New Albany		Title V sub-grantee
Noxubee County School District http://schooltree.org/MS-NOXUBEE.html		Title V sub-grantee
Sav-A-Life of Amory www.youthsuccess.org		Title V sub-grantee
Sav-A-Life of Cleveland		Title V sub-grantee
Simpson County School www2.mde.k12.ms.us/6400/		Title V sub-grantee
Starkville School District www.starkville.k12.ms.us		Title V sub-grantee
West Jackson Community Development Center		Title V sub-grantee
Youth ALIVE Jones County www.scrmc.com/html/alivejonescounty.html		Title V sub-grantee
Community Matters Inc. 2004-2007	\$784,227	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant The Mississippi Community Education Center 2004-2007	\$750,600	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Youth Opportunities Unlimited 2004-2005	\$260,633	AFLA

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Mississippi Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

Equality Mississippi
PO Box 6021
Jackson, MS 39288-6021
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: (888) MS-FAMILY
www.msfamily.org

Newspapers in Mississippi

The Clarion-Ledger

Pam Berry
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 40
Jackson, MS 39205
Phone: (601) 961-7264

Mississippi Press

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

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal

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

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 2004 begins on October 1, 2003 and ends on September 30, 2004.

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 Lerner, "Post-Roe Postcard;" Governor Barbour, "A Proclamation."

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

⁶ David Crary, "Mississippi Abortion Clinic Stands Alone," *LA Times* (CA), 2 January 2005, A21.

⁷ Crary, "Mississippi Tries Everything to Curb Abortions."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lerner, "Post-Roe Postcard,;" Jerry Mitchell, "Killer of abortion doctor was active locally," *Clarion-Ledger*, 31 August 2003, accessed 25 January 2005 <<http://www.fadp.org/news/ClarionLedger-20030831.htm>>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Crary, "Mississippi Abortion Clinic Stands Alone." Lerner, "Post-Roe Postcard."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Associated Press, "Mississippi: Window into future of abortion debate," *CNN.com*, 28 December 2004.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 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/yrb/>>.

¹⁷ *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 January 28, 2005, <www.guttmacher.org>.

¹⁸ *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>>.

¹⁹ *Youth Success, Sav-A-Life*, accessed 21 December 2004, <www.youthsuccess.org/savalife.html>.

²⁰ 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).

²¹ SIECUS was not able to obtain exact funding amounts for all grantees.