



SIECUS PUBLIC POLICY OFFICE

STATE PROFILE

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma received \$690,342 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2006.¹

Oklahoma Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Oklahoma does not require schools to teach sexuality education. However, the state Departments of Education and Health must develop curricula and materials and keep them current. If a school district chooses to teach sexuality education, all curricula and materials must be approved for medical accuracy by the state and by the district superintendent. All materials must also be available to parents for review. In addition, all sexuality education classes must have as one of their primary purposes “the teaching of or informing students about the practice of abstinence.”

Schools are required to provide HIV/AIDS-prevention education. This education must be limited to the “discussion of the disease AIDS and its spread and prevention.” The class must be taught once during either grade five or six, once during grades seven through nine, and once during grades ten through 12. All curricula and materials must be checked for medical accuracy by the Oklahoma Department of Health and must only include “factual medical information for AIDS prevention.” HIV/AIDS education must specifically teach that:

- Engaging in homosexual activity, promiscuous sexual activity, intravenous drug use or contact with contaminated blood products is now known to be primarily responsible for contact with the AIDS virus;
- Avoiding the activities specified above is the only method of preventing the spread of the virus;
- Artificial means of birth control are not a certain means of preventing the spread of the AIDS virus and reliance on such methods puts a person at risk for exposure to the disease; and
- Sexual intercourse, with or without condoms, with any person testing positive for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) antibodies, or any other person infected with HIV, places that individual in a high risk category for developing AIDS.

In addition, the *Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) Integrated Curriculum: Health, Safety, and Physical Education* includes standards for HIV/AIDS education in seventh through twelfth grades. These standards require this instruction to:

- Investigate and examine current information about HIV/AIDS in order to differentiate related facts, opinions, and myths;
- Examine and identify the importance of sexual abstinence in adolescent relationships;
- Demonstrate refusal skills (saying “no”), negotiation skills and peer resistance skills related to sexual health;

- Analyze the transmission and methods of prevention for STDs and HIV;
- Identify risk behaviors and situations involving possible exposure to HIV;
- Examine the relationships between injecting drug use (IDU) and contact with contaminated blood products and the transmission of HIV; and
- Analyze the efficiency of artificial means of birth control in preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

A school district must provide written notification of all sexuality and HIV/AIDS-prevention classes. Parents or guardians can submit written notification if they do not want their children to participate in such classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Oklahoma Statutes 70-11-103.3, 70-11-105.1, and *the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) Integrated Curriculum: Health, Safety, and Physical Education*.

Recent Legislation

Legislation Outlines Requirements for Sexuality Education Provided with State Funding

House Bill 1534, introduced in February of 2007, requires that recipients of state funding that provide information on sex, family planning, pregnancy counseling, or sexually transmitted diseases ensure that such information is medically accurate, factual, age-appropriate and includes information “on both abstinence and contraception for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases,” including HIV/AIDS. The bill currently resides in the House Committee on Public Health.

House Resolution Designates Day of Purity; Declares Support for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Instruction

House Resolution 1059, introduced in January of 2006, declared the 13th of February 2006 the First Annual Day of Purity, and suggested that it should be instituted throughout the state in an effort to restore healthy communities and raise awareness of sexual abstinence until marriage. The resolution justified this new holiday by in part by saying: “whereas sexual abstinence until marriage is 100% effective, 100% of the time, in preventing out-of-wedlock births, STDs, and abortions; whereas many of the youth in Oklahoma and across the United States desire to make a public statement to show their enthusiasm and support for sexual abstinence until marriage; and whereas the approaching Valentine’s Day is a holiday time when friendship and love are focused in our hearts and minds.” The resolution also declares that the Oklahoma Legislature supports the proliferation of school purity peer clubs and the “classroom instruction of abstinence education until marriage.” The measure was adopted and enrolled by the House of Representatives on February 14, 2006.

Events of Note

Oklahoma House of Representatives Passes Anti-Gay Book Ban

May 2005; Tulsa, OK

The Oklahoma House of Representatives voted 81–3 to pass House Resolution 1039, which calls on Oklahoma libraries to “confine homosexually-themed books and other age-inappropriate material to areas exclusively for adult access and distribution.”²² The bill, introduced in May 2005 by state Representative Sally Kern (R-Oklahoma City), also requires that no public funds be used in “the distribution of such materials to children.”²³ Representative Kern explained, “There are some issues little children aren’t emotionally equipped to tackle and many parents believe the issue of sexual preference is one of them.... Parents have a right to know that certain books deal with age-sensitive issues and decide for themselves if their child is ready to read those materials.”²⁴

The three Democratic representatives who voted against the measure, however, said it would strip power from local library boards and would strain their already stretched resources.⁵ Darrell Gilbert (D-Tulsa) explained his outrage saying, “If this is a book that you want to have in, quote, an adult-only access part of the library—which there aren’t any such things—you’re going to have to take every anatomy book and put it in there, too, because it has nude bodies in it, pictures of body parts. Where does it stop?”⁶

Kern countered, “This isn’t censorship, because I’m not asking that they be thrown away, be burned. I’m asking that they just be put in with adult collections and then if a parent wants their child to see a book like that they can check it out.”⁷

The debate over books dealing with sexual orientation followed a controversy in Kern’s district in March over the children’s book *King and King*⁸ which tells the story of a character named Prince Bertie who falls in love with a character named Prince Lee. It is written for readers ages six and up by two Dutch authors and has been the subject of several controversies around the country. Kern called the book “obscene.”⁹

Oklahoma’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note¹⁰

- In 2005, 48% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students in Oklahoma reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 4% of female high school students and 9% of male high school students in Oklahoma 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 2005, 14% of female high school students and 21% of male high school students in Oklahoma reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 17% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 37% of female high school students and 35% of male high school students in Oklahoma 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 33% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 54% of females and 69% of males in Oklahoma reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 56% of females and 70% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 20% of females and 13% of males in Oklahoma reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 17% of females and 29% of males in Oklahoma reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 28% of males nationwide.

- In 2005, 85% of high school students in Oklahoma reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Oklahoma's abortion rate was 12 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹¹
- In 2004, Oklahoma's birth rate was 56 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 41 per 1,000 nationwide.¹²

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Oklahoma received \$690,342 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2006. 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. Oklahoma matches federal funding with \$183,332 of state funds; the remainder of the match comes from community providers.

The majority of the funding, administered by the Oklahoma Department of Health, is divided among two sub-grantees and an evaluation. A total of \$213,462 is used for program and fiscal administration at the Oklahoma State Department of Health Central Office. In addition, \$74,797 was provided to the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Oklahoma for program evaluation. The remainder of the funding is divided between the sub-grantees: Oklahoma Family Policy Council and Pushmataha County Health Department. The sub-grantees use a combination of curricula, including *Choosing the Best* and *Facing Reality*.¹³ Sub-grantees also use materials from the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, an organization known for using fear- and shame-based messages in its abstinence-only-until-marriage materials.¹⁴

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 pre-marital 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 (sic).” *Choosing the Best PATH* says, “Sexual activity also can lead to the trashing of a person’s reputation, resulting in the loss of friends.”¹⁵

SIECUS reviewed *Facing Reality* and found that it includes very little information about sexual behavior, STDs, HIV/AIDS, condoms, or contraception. Instead, the curriculum focuses almost exclusively on the negative consequences of premarital sexual activity. These discussions include messages of fear and shame as well as biased statements about gender and sexual orientation. *Facing Reality* tells parents and teachers that “many homosexual activists are frustrated and desperate over their own situation and those of loved ones. Many are dying, in part, due to ignorance. Educators who struggle to overcome ignorance and instill self-mastery in their students will inevitably lead them to recognize that some people with AIDS are now suffering because of the choices they made.”¹⁶

The Oklahoma Family Policy Council (OFPC) exists “to strengthen families, to educate Oklahomans on public policy as it impacts the family, to encourage responsible citizenship, and to restore traditional, Judeo-Christian principles in American public policy.” It reports that it advocates on behalf of a number of issues including “the sanctity of human life—viewing life as God’s beautiful gift from conception to natural death, fatherhood—helping men to become the best dads

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possible, motherhood, and traditional marriage—i.e., marriage between one-man and one-woman.”¹⁷ OFPC is associated with both the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family, two national, conservative, anti-gay and anti-choice organizations.

OFPC runs the *KEEP (Kids Eagerly Endorsing Purity)* program. According to the program’s website, over one-third of Oklahoma’s 77 counties currently use an abstinence-only curriculum.¹⁸ The program focuses on young people between the ages of 12 and 18 and includes one session about STDs led by a physician from the Oklahoma Physicians Resource Council, an organization formed in association with Focus on the Family’s Physicians Resource Council.¹⁹

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

There are no CBAE or AFLA grants in Oklahoma.

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2006

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Oklahoma State Department of Health www.health.state.ok.us	\$690,342 federal \$183,332 state	Title V
Institute of Public Affairs, University of Oklahoma www.ou.edu/cas/psc/ipa	\$74,797	Title V sub-grantee
Oklahoma Family Policy Council www.okfamilypc.org	\$125,000	Title V sub-grantee
Pushmataha County Health Department	\$125,000	Title V sub-grantee

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Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Oklahoma State Department of Health
1000 N.E. Tenth St.
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Phone: (405) 271-4477

Oklahoma Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

NARAL Pro-Choice Oklahoma
P.O. Box 702503
Tulsa, OK 74170
Phone: (918) 494-9585
www.okchoice.org

Oklahoma Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice
P.O. Box 35194
Tulsa, OK 74153
Phone: (918) 481-6444
www.okrcrc.org

Planned Parenthood of Arkansas and
Eastern Oklahoma
5780 South Peoria
Tulsa, OK 74105
Phone: (918) 858-5200
www.plannedparenthood.org/arkansas-eastern-oklahoma

Planned Parenthood of Central Oklahoma
619 North West 23rd St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73103
Phone: (405) 528-0221
www.ppcok.org

Oklahoma Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Oklahoma Family Policy Council
3908 North Peniel Ave.
Bethany Bank Tower, Suite 100
Bethany, OK 73008
Phone: (405) 787-7744
www.okfamilypc.org

Oklahomans for Life
3105 East Skelly Dr., Suite 605
Tulsa, OK 74105
Phone: (918) 749-5022
www.okforlife.org

Newspapers in Oklahoma

Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise
Jessica Miller
Education Reporter
4125 Nowata Rd.
Bartlesville, OK 74006
Phone: (918) 335-8200

The Daily Ardmoreite
Mark Francis
Education Reporter
117 W. Broadway St.
Ardmore, OK 73401
Phone: (580) 221-6542

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Enid News and Eagle
Scott Fitzgerald
Medical/Health Reporter
227 W. Broadway Ave.
Enid, OK 73701
Phone: (580) 548-8158

The Lawton Constitution
Philip Muse
Medical/Health Reporter
102 SW 3rd St.
Lawton, OK 73501
Phone: (580) 585-5139

Muskogee Daily Phoenix
Ed Choate
City Editor
214 Wall St.
Muskogee, OK 74401
Phone: (918) 684-2933

News-Capital & Democrat
Trevor Dunbar
City Editor
500 S. 2nd St.
McAlester, OK 74501
Phone: (918) 421-2024

The Norman Transcript
Carol Cole
Community Reporter
215 E. Comanche St.
Norman, OK 73069
Phone: (405) 366-3538

The Oklahoman
Jim Killackey
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P.O. Box 25125
Oklahoma City, OK 73125
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Ponca City News
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Tulsa World
Omer Gillham
Education Writer
P.O. Box 1770
Tulsa, OK 74102
Phone: (918) 581-8400

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 2006 begins on October 1, 2005 and ends on September 30, 2006.

² Oklahoma House of Representatives Media Division, “Lawmakers Vote to Restrict Access to Homosexual-Themed Children’s Books,” Press Release published 9 May 2005, accessed 11 May 2005, <<http://www.lsb.state.ok.us/house/news7551.html>>.

³ *State Sexual and Reproductive Health Legislative Reports* (Washington, DC: SIECUS, 2005), accessed 11 May 2005, <<http://www.siecus.org/policy/legislative/legis0000.html>>.

⁴ Oklahoma House of Representatives Media Division, “Lawmakers Vote to Restrict Access.”

⁵ United Press International, “Okla. Lawmakers Vote to Restrict Gay Books,” *The Washington Times*, 10 May 2005, accessed 11 May 2005, <<http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20050510-094222-7146r.htm>>.

⁶ “Oklahoma House Passes Gay Book Ban,” *365Gay.com*, 10 May 2005, accessed 11 May 2005, <http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/05/051005okBooks.htm>.

⁷ United Press International, “Okla. Lawmakers Vote to Restrict Gay Books.”

⁸ “Oklahoma House Passes Gay Book Ban,” *365Gay.com*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from Danice K. Eaton, et al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 55, no. SS-5 (9 June 2006): 1-108, accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>>.

¹¹ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: The Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/09/12/USTPstats.pdf>>.

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¹² *National Vital Statistics Reports 55.01* (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2006), 10, accessed 26 January 2006, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf>.

¹³ “Program Model,” KEEP, accessed 14 February 2007, <<http://www.okfamilypc.org/KEEP/Program/model.htm>>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 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>.

¹⁶ James R. Coughlin, *Facing Reality* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 1998). For more information see *Toward a Sexually Healthy America, Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs that Try to Keep Our Youth Scared Chaste* at <http://www.siecus.org/pubs/tsha_scaredchaste.pdf>.

¹⁷ “About OFPC,” 2003, accessed 7 February 2007, <http://0000952.previewcoxhosting.com/about_ofpc.htm>.

¹⁸ “About OFPC and KEEP,” KEEP, accessed 14 February 2007, <<http://www.okfamilypc.org/KEEP/About/about.htm>>.

¹⁹ “Abstinence Education,” Oklahoma Family Policy Council, 2003, accessed 14 February 2007, <http://0000952.previewcoxhosting.com/abstinence_education.htm>.