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Ohio received \$7,743,958 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2005.¹

Ohio Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Ohio does not require schools to teach sexuality education. However, the board of education of each school district must establish a health curriculum for “all schools under their control” that includes information regarding sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. This information must emphasize that, “abstinence from sexual activity is the only protection that is one hundred percent effective against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, and the sexual transmission of a virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.” Further, all materials and instruction regarding STDs must:

- Stress that students should abstain from sexual activity until after marriage;
- Teach the potential physical, psychological, emotional, and social side effects of participating in sexual activity outside of marriage;
- Teach that conceiving children out of wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child’s parents, and society;
- Stress that sexually transmitted diseases are serious possible hazards of sexual activity;
- Advise students of the laws pertaining to financial responsibility of parents to children born in and out of wedlock; and
- Advise students of the circumstances under which it is criminal to have sexual contact with a person under the age of sixteen pursuant to section 2907.04 of the Revised Code.

These points closely mirror the federal definition of “abstinence education.”

Upon written request of a parent or guardian, a student can be excused from taking any or all of this instruction. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Ohio Revised Code Sections 3313.60, 3313.60.11, and 3301-80-01.

Recent Legislation

SIECUS is not aware of any proposed legislation regarding sexuality education in Ohio.

Events of Note

Advocates Expose the Reality of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in Ohio

June 2005; Cleveland, OH

Released on June 13, 2005, *Report on Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in Ohio* by Dr. Scott Frank of the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, reviews several major areas of concern with Ohio's abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and the curricula used within these programs. The report details how these curricula contain false and misleading information about contraceptives and abortion, misrepresent religious beliefs as facts, present gender stereotypes as universal truths, do not meet the needs of all Ohio youth, and are not based in science.²

In the report, Dr. Frank expresses concern that these curricula are administered by groups that "are not public health organizations, but rather, ideologically oriented groups in a campaign to impose a strict understanding of religion, 'purity,' and morality on America's youth."³ The report states that this agenda is promoted at the expense of factual information, and that classes are often taught by instructors who may not have the appropriate credentials or teaching experience.⁴

The author offers six suggestions on how to improve Ohio's abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and curricula:

- revise the requirements of the abstinence-only-until-marriage program to address the needs of all youth;
- provide information on contraception and STD protection for sexually active youth;
- implement third-party scientific review of the abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula;
- establish standards of competence for abstinence-only-until-marriage educators;
- offer parents a greater say in determining what type of sexuality education their children receive; and
- offer more resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth.⁵

The previous April, organizations and churches from across Ohio were joined by the mayor of Cleveland and the Cleveland Department of Public Health to call for a suspension of all abstinence-only-until-marriage funding "until research proves their outcome effectiveness."⁶ These organizations included the AIDS Task Force of Greater Cleveland, Ohio AIDS Coalition, the Healthy Fathering Collaborative of Greater Cleveland, YWCA Dayton, and the YWCA of Greater Cleveland.

Former School Board Candidate Advocates for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program

December 2004; Toledo, OH

Although her 2001 bid for the Toledo board of education failed, a candidate who focused heavily on abstinence-only-until-marriage in her campaign decided to repeat her calls for an abstinence-only program.

At a 2004 school board meeting, the woman advocated for a switch to an abstinence-only-until-marriage program in the schools, stating that, "we should not be teaching safe sex. We should be teaching abstinence-only-until-marriage."⁷ She also claimed that the local junior high was handing out condoms to students, although school officials denied that claim.

The coordinator of health services for the school system defended the school's program and said that the school does encourage students to abstain from sex but also teaches about contraception. The coordinator explained, "we talk about abstinence as the most appropriate course to take, and certainly

the safest. . . . It is my opinion that abstinence-only education is flawed. We have to recognize that children are going to be sexually active, and to deny them information on protection is unrealistic.”⁸

The former candidate originally decided to run for the school board after learning that the existing sexuality education curriculum included discussions about homosexuality. She declared, “they’re coming out of the closet and I’m coming out saying I’m opposed to it.”⁹

Ohio’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note¹⁰

- In 2005, 47% of female high school students and 49% of male high school students in Ohio 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 7% of male high school students in Ohio 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, 15% of female high school students and 19% of male high school students in Ohio 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, 36% of female high school students and 37% of male high school students in Ohio 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, 60% of females and 63% of males in Ohio 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, 24% of females and 17% of males in Ohio 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, 19% of females and 26% of males in Ohio 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, 91% of high school students in Ohio reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Ohio’s abortion rate was 17 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹¹
- In 2002, Ohio’s birth rate was 40 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹²

- In 2001, there were 279 live births to young women ages 10–14, 5,251 live births to young women ages 15–17, and 11,764 live births to young women ages 18–19 in Ohio.¹³

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Ohio received \$1,640,982 in 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. Ohio provides \$500,000 in state funds and the rest of the match is provided by the sub-grantees.

Six of the 13 sub-grantees target young people from elementary to high school through in-school programs, after-school programs, and community center programs. The remaining sub-grantees include a hospital, which houses a program used in area schools, two crisis pregnancy centers, and four local health departments. The sub-grantees use a variety of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula including *Choosing the Best*, *A.C. Green's Game Plan*, and *Navigator*. One sub-grantee developed its own curriculum.

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.”¹⁴

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. 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 that, “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.”¹⁵

In addition, SIECUS reviewed *Navigator* and found that it relies on messages of fear and shame, inaccurate and misleading information, and biased views of marriage, sexual orientation, and pregnancy options. *Navigator* fails to provide important information on sexual health, and the format and underlying biases of the curriculum dictate specific values and discourage critical thinking. For example, the authors explain, “*Navigator* does not promote the use of contraceptives for teens. No contraceptive device is guaranteed to prevent pregnancy. Besides, students who do not exercise self-control to remain abstinent are not likely to exercise self-control in the use of a contraceptive device.”¹⁶

One sub-grantee, the Abstinence Educator’s Network, includes inaccurate and misleading information on its website. For example, although the website discussed Chlamydia and syphilis, it does not explain that these STDs are curable or mention any treatment options, leaving the false impression that these infections cannot be treated or cured. In addition, the website also exaggerates condom failure.¹⁷

Another sub-grantee, Pregnancy Decision Health Centers, is a crisis pregnancy center. Crisis pregnancy centers typically advertise as providing medical services and then use anti-choice propaganda, misinformation, and fear and shame tactics to dissuade women facing unintended pregnancy from exercising their right to choose. Pregnancy Decision Health Centers explains that its mission is to “to provide caring services for responsible sexual values and alternatives to abortion to as many individuals as possible in the Central Ohio area.”¹⁸ The organization does this through “programs which provide pregnancy testing and intervention, pregnancy confirmation through medical examination and ultrasound, mentoring and nurturing support, linkage to community resources, education and training, post abortion support, material aid, housing referrals for pregnant girls and women, and abstinence education in the community.”¹⁹

Information on the organization’s website is inaccurate and misleading and contains clear religious connotations throughout. For example, the website explains that the organization provides “counseling, education, and support services for those wishing to continue or to begin a healthy lifestyle consistent with God’s plan for their sexuality.”²⁰

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE)²¹ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are seven CBAE grantees in Ohio: ATM Education, Inc., Elizabeth’s New Life Center (receives two grants), Heartbeats of Licking County, Operation Keepsake, RIDGE (Reality Instruction Developing Generations of Excellence) Project, Inc., Ross County Health District, and St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center. There are three AFLA grantees in Ohio: Catholic Social Services of Miami Valley, St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, and Tri County Right to Life Educational Foundation.

Operation Keepsake’s website contains a section geared towards young people, which includes questions and answers. One young person asks, “if you’re in a relationship and you have sex, does it always break up?” The response is:

No, but very often the focus of the relationship becomes the physical instead of things that actually make a relationship last, like friendship, respect, trust, etc. Sex within a committed marriage relationship adds strength to a relationship, but when you add sex before marriage it’s like putting icing on a cake without adding the main ingredients that will hold the cake together—flour, eggs, butter, sugar, etc.²²

Another young person asks, “How far can my boyfriend and I go in our relationship and still be safe?” The response is:

If you’re concerned about your emotional health, then I would say anything past kissing is a risk. It may sound crazy, and I know a lot of teen magazines will tell you differently, but at represent [the name of the website] we are all about speaking out and telling you the truth—straight up. If you’re honest with yourself, although it may feel good for the moment, anything past kissing can be dangerous emotionally and physically. When you go to French kissing, you are thinking more with your body than with your brain. Your body is saying, this feels good, go further.²³

Another CBAE grantee, Elizabeth’s New Life Center, is a crisis pregnancy center which includes information about STDs on its website. This information is presented in a fear-based manner, leaves

out important information (such as which STDs can be cured and the fact that some have no symptoms), and implies that condoms are not effective.²⁴ The website also includes anti-choice messages.

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (Includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Ohio Department of Health www.odh.state.oh.us/odhprograms/educ/aed1.htm	\$1,640,982 federal \$500,000 state	Title V
Abstinence Educators' Network http://members.tripod.com/abednet/	\$140,000	Title V sub-grantee
Abstinence the Better Choice, Inc www.abstinencebetterchoice.com	\$249,278	Title V sub-grantee
Clark County Combined Health District	\$102,400	Title V sub-grantee
Directions for Youth and Families www.directionsforyouth.org	\$67,977	Title V sub-grantee
Healthy Visions http://healthyvisions.org/	\$140,000	Title V sub-grantee
Huron County General Health District www.huroncohealth.com	\$120,000	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (Includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
Miami County General Health District www.miamicountyhealth.net	\$120,012	Title V sub-grantee
Pregnancy Decision Health Center www.pdhc.org	\$104,000	Title V sub-grantee
Pregnancy Resource Center	\$39,151	Title V sub-grantee
Responsible Education for Abstinence and Character (REACH)	\$190,000	Title V sub-grantee
The Ridge Project Inc (Reality Instruction Developing Generations of Excellence) DUAL GRANTEE 2004–2007	\$190,000 \$800,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE
St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center TRIPLE GRANTEE 2005–2008 TRIPLE GRANTEE 2005–2006	\$85,256 \$627,285 \$300,000	Title V sub-grantee CBAE AFLA
Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department www.zmchd.org	\$128,000	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (Includes Title V, CBAE, and AFLA)
ATM Education, Inc. 2003–2006	\$686,278	CBAE
Elizabeth’s New Life Center 2002–2005 DUAL GRANTEE 2005–2008 www.elizabethnewlife.org	\$684,364 \$800,000	CBAE CBAE
Heartbeats of Licking County 2002–2005 www.heartbeats-olc.org	\$378,009	CBAE
Operation Keepsake 2002–2005 www.operationkeepsake.com	\$577,040	CBAE
Ross County Health District 2004–2007	\$800,000	CBAE
Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley 2005–2006	\$225,000	AFLA
Tri County Right to Life Educational Foundation 2005–2006	\$225,000	AFLA

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

Valerie Huber
Ohio Department of Health
Office of Abstinence Education
246 North High St., 7th Floor
PO Box 118
Columbus, OH 43216
Phone: (614) 728-4761

Ohio Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

The AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland
3210 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44115
Phone: (216) 621-0766
www.aidstaskforce.org

Family Planning Association of Northeast
Ohio
54 S. State St.
Painesville, OH 44077
Phone: (440) 352-0608
www.fpaneo.org

NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio
12000 Shaker Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44120
Phone: (216) 283-2180
www.naralohio.org

Ohio AIDS Coalition
48 W. Whittier St.
Columbus, OH.43206
Phone: (614) 444-1683
www.ohioaidscoalition.org

Ohio Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice
PO Box 82204
Columbus, OH 43202
Phone: (614) 221-3636
www.ohiorcrc.org

Planned Parenthood of Summit, Portage,
and Medina Counties
444 W. Exchange St.
Akron, OH 44302
Phone: (330) 535-2671
www.ppinfo.org

Ohio Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Abstinence Educators' Network (AEN), Inc.
PO Box 30
Westville, OH 43083
Phone: (937) 408-5992
www.abednet.org

Abstinence Resource Centre
211 S. Main St., Suite 800
Dayton, OH 45402
Phone: (937) 223-5250
www.getthetruth.net

Christian Coalition of Ohio
PO Box 852
Westfield Center, OH 44251
Phone: (330) 887-1922
www.ccoho.org

Citizens For Community Values
11175 Reading Rd., Suite 103
Cincinnati, OH 45241
Phone: (513) 733-5775
www.ccv.org

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Ohio Right to Life Society
2238 S. Hamilton Rd., Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43232
Phone: (614) 864-5200
www.ohiolife.org

Ohio Policy Roundtable
11288 Alameda Dr.
Strongsville, OH 44149
Phone: (800) 522-VOTE
www.ohioroundtable.org

Newspapers in Ohio

Akron Beacon Journal
Kathy Frazee
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 640
Akron, OH 44309
Phone: (330) 996-3867

Akron Beacon Journal
Tracy Wheeler
Health & Medicine Reporter
PO Box 640
Akron, OH 44309
Phone: (330) 996-3721

The Blade
Luke Shockman
Health & Medicine Reporter
PO Box 921
Toledo, OH 43697
Phone: (419) 724-6084

The Cincinnati Enquirer
Peggy O'Farrell
Health & Medicine Reporter
312 Elm St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Phone: (513) 768-8510

The Cincinnati Enquirer
Jennifer Mrozowski
Education Reporter
312 Elm St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Phone: (513) 768-8509

The Cincinnati Post
Michael Collins
Correspondent
1090 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 408-2711

The Cincinnati Post
Wayne Perry
Health & Medicine Editor
125 E. Court St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Phone: (513) 352-2828

Cleveland/Akron Family
Frances Richards
Editor
35475 Vine St.
Willowick, OH 44095
Phone: (440) 510-2000

The Columbus Dispatch
Mary Bridgman
Education Reporter
34 S. 3rd St.
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 461-5007

The Columbus Dispatch
Medicine Editor
34 S. 3rd St.
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: (614) 461-5000

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Dayton Daily News
Scott Elliott
Education Writer
45 S. Ludlow St.
Dayton, OH 45402
Phone: (937) 225-2485

Dayton Daily News
Kevin Lamb
Health & Medicine Writer
PO Box 1287
Dayton, OH 45401
Phone: (937) 225-2129

Dayton Daily News
Connie Post
Health & Medicine Editor
45 S. Ludlow St.
Dayton, OH 45402
Phone: (937) 225-2441

The News-Herald
Larece Galer
Community News Assistant Editor
7085 Mentor Ave.
Willoughby, OH 44094
Phone: (440) 951-0000

The Plain Dealer
Sabrina Eaton
Federal Legislation Correspondent
930 National Press Building
Washington, DC 20045
Phone: (202) 638-1366

The Plain Dealer
Bob McAuley
Health & Medicine Editor
1801 Superior Ave. E
Cleveland, OH 44114
Phone: (216) 999-4878

The Plain Dealer
Regina McEnery
Health & Medicine Reporter
1801 Superior Ave. E
Cleveland, OH 44114
Phone: (216) 999-5338

The Repository
Gary Brown
Medical/Health Editor
500 Market Ave. S
Canton, OH 44702
Phone: (330) 580-8303

The Vindicator
Mike McGowan
Medical/Health Editor
107 Vindicator Sq.
Youngstown, OH 44503
Phone: (330) 747-1471

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 Scott H. Frank, MD, MS, *Report on Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in Ohio*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University, June 2005).

³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁶ AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, "Cleveland Mayor, Department of Health Join 34 Organizations and Churches Across Ohio to Call for Suspension of Abstinence-Only Funding," Press Release published 22 April 2005, accessed 5 July 2005, <<http://reform.democrats.house.gov/story.asp?id=734>>.

⁷ Ignazio Messina, "TPS Urged to Remove Birth Control from Sex Ed," *Toledo Blade*, 3 December 2004, B1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ S. Svoboda, "Board Hopeful Berry Criticizes Sex Education," *Toledo Blade*, 22 October 2001.

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 8 June 2006, <<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: Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 28 January 2005, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/state_pregnancy_trends.pdf>.

¹² *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>>.

¹³ *Ohio Department of Health Information Warehouse*, Ohio Department of Health (2005), accessed 8 February 2005, <<http://dwhouse.odh.ohio.gov>>.

¹⁴ 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>.

¹⁵ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *A.C. Green's Game Plan* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2001). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *A.C. Green's Game Plan* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

¹⁶ Scott Phelps and Libby Gray, *Navigator: Finding Your Way to A Healthy and Successful Future* (Golf, IL: Project Reality, 2003). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *Navigator* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

¹⁷ *STD's – The Silent Killers*, Abstinence Educator's Network, accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://members.tripod.com/abednet/std.htm>>

¹⁸ *PDHC – Our Mission*, Pregnancy Decision Health Centers (2005), accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://www.pdhc.org/do/about/mission.php>>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *PDHC – Services We Offer*, Pregnancy Decision Health Centers (2005), accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://www.pdhc.org/do/services/index.php>>

²¹ 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).

²² *Represent: Ask Brock, Ask Jen*, Operation Keepsake (Fall 2003), accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://operationkeepsake.com/represent/>>.

²³ *Represent: Ask Brock, Ask Jen*, Operation Keepsake (Fall 2004), accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://operationkeepsake.com/represent/>>.

²⁴ *Elizabeth's New Life Center – Home Page*, Elizabeth's New Life Center (2002), accessed 11 January 2006, <<http://www.elizabethhelps.com/>>.