



## PENNSYLVANIA

*Pennsylvania received \$3,845,139 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2006.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Pennsylvania Sexuality Education Law and Policy**

Schools in Pennsylvania are not required to teach sexuality education. Primary, intermediate, middle, and high schools are, however, required to teach sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. Schools must use materials that have been determined by the local school district, are age-appropriate, discuss prevention, and stress abstinence as “the only completely reliable means of preventing sexual transmission.”

The state has created the *Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education*, which includes STD- and HIV-prevention education. All decisions regarding HIV-prevention curricula and materials must be made by local school districts. School districts do not have to follow a specific curriculum, but they must use these standards as a framework for the development of their curricula.

School districts must publicize the fact that parents and guardians can review all curriculum materials. Parents and guardians whose principles or religious beliefs conflict with instruction may excuse their children from the programs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Pennsylvania Code Title 22, Chapter 4, Section 29 and the *Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education*.

### **Recent Legislation**

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

### **Events of Note**

*School Board Member Makes Anti-Gay Comments*  
November 2006; Ambridge, PA

During a school board discussion on the formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance at the high school, the Vice President of the Ambridge Area School Board referred to the alliance as a “sex club.” When other board members suggested that he misunderstood the mission of the club, he replied, “Ok, the faggots.”<sup>2</sup>

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) of Pittsburgh asked for the board member to formally apologize and to attend an anti-discrimination workshop, or to resign.<sup>3</sup>

In December, after hearing discrimination complaints from GSA members, the school’s principal and school board discussed the possibility of sensitivity training for students and teachers. GLSEN offered to lead workshops at the high school. A GLSEN spokesman is hopeful that the

training will help with the harassment. “In general, I think there is just a lack of understanding,” he said.<sup>4</sup>

*School District’s Designation of October as “Gay and Lesbian History Month” Sparked Debates  
October 2006; Philadelphia, PA*

In the fall of 2006, the Philadelphia School District event calendar noted October as “Gay and Lesbian History Month” for the first time. The school board added Gay and Lesbian History Month as part of an effort to be more inclusive. “This is part of a long-standing district policy requiring equity for all races and minority groups,” the district’s Senior Vice President for Communications and Community Relations explained. She said, “It is one of four special history months noted, along with Hispanic Heritage in September, African-American in February, and Asian-Pacific American in May,” adding that it is “an event that falls under the school district’s Policy 102, which calls for tolerance and respect for all regardless of race, creed, gender or ethnicity.”<sup>5</sup>

The school board has assured parents that there would not be any district-wide curricula implemented or celebrations held to honor the month. Cummings explained, however, that individual schools with Gay-Straight Alliances may have observances.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these assurances, many parents expressed concern that the curriculum would change to accommodate Gay and Lesbian History Month. Some parents even asked that their children be removed from Philadelphia Public Schools for the entire month of October. Some parents suggested that this event was an endorsement of homosexuality which was confusing to children and inappropriate for schools. One critic claimed homosexuality is a psychosis and called for a boycott of the schools. “Next, there may be fornication pride month, adulterer pride month, pedophile pride month, etc.,”<sup>7</sup> he asserted at a recent school board meeting.

Other parents and community members in Philadelphia were disturbed by the racial implications of the school board’s decision to equate Gay and Lesbian History Month with months designed to honor the history of racial/ethnic groups. “The problem for us then is not the month itself, but the claim it makes openly,” explained an official at the African-American Freedom & Reconstruction League. “The first claim is that Gay and Lesbian History Month is the same as Black History Month, and the second claim is the Gay struggle underline (sic) the African-American struggles for basic rights. When in reality the Gay and Lesbian History Month is introducing a lifestyle that is totally unacceptable to most people of African descent,” he continued.<sup>8</sup>

Other community members went even further, denouncing Gay and Lesbian History Month as a white-oriented racist agenda. One person even called out for segregating schools, creating a separate school for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.

The district has received complaints about its calendars in the past, but never this many.

*Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Program Using Money to Promote Religion  
August 2005; PA*

On August 23, 2005, the Bush Administration suspended a federal grant to the Silver Ring Thing (SRT), a faith-based abstinence-only-until-marriage program, saying that it appeared the program was using tax money for religious activities. Officials at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ordered the group to submit a “corrective action plan” if it wishes to receive the remainder of its \$75,000 grant. In a letter to SRT’s program director, Harry Wilson of HHS’ Family and Youth Services Bureau said the project “includes both secular and religious components that are not adequately safeguarded.”<sup>9</sup>

The action came three months after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a lawsuit against HHS, accusing the Administration of using tax dollars to promote Christianity. In documents filed in federal court in Boston, the ACLU alleged that the activities, brochures, and website of SRT were

“permeated with religion” and use “taxpayer dollars to promote religious content, instruction and indoctrination.”<sup>10</sup>

The program’s teenage graduates sign a covenant “before God Almighty” to remain virgins until marriage and earn a silver ring inscribed with a Bible passage reminding them to “keep clear of sexual sin.” Many of the events are held in churches and, in filings with the Internal Revenue Service, the organization describes its mission as “evangelical ministry” with an emphasis on “evangelistic crusade planning.”<sup>11</sup>

The ACLU declared a partial victory but said it will continue to monitor the group’s activities. “We’re really pleased the government has recognized Silver Ring Thing was misusing public dollars to promote its own faith over all others,” said senior staff attorney Julie Sternberg. “It’s improper for the federal government to underwrite a national roadshow designed to convert teenagers to a particular faith.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Pennsylvania’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note**

- In 2000, Pennsylvania’s abortion rate was 17 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2004, Pennsylvania’s birth rate was 31 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 41 per 1,000 nationwide.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*<sup>15</sup>

- In 2003, 57% of female high school students and 71% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 6% of female high school students and 27% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 16% of female high school students and 42% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 43% of female high school students and 53% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 10% of females and 17% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 64% of females and 76% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 13% of females and 5% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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 9% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.

### **Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding**

Pennsylvania received \$1,693,422 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2006. In Fiscal Year 2005, the state chose not to apply for these funds due to the extraordinary restrictions placed on how the money must be spent. However, Governor Rendell reversed course and Pennsylvania once again accepts the funds. The Pennsylvania Department of Health is in the process of receiving applications for Fiscal Year 2006 Title V funding from organizations throughout the state, but, as of this writing, had yet to determine Title V sub-grantees.

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. SIECUS was unable to determine how Pennsylvania makes up this match.

#### *Title V Evaluation*

Pennsylvania evaluated its Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in 2003. The evaluators found that nine of the 13 abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in the state had little to no effect on reducing “early sexual onset,” and that the effects of all programs had faded by the time students reached ninth grade.<sup>16</sup> The programs served youth 12 and older and used a number of curricula including *Me, My World, My Future* and *WAIT (Why Am I Tempted) Training*.

Pennsylvania’s evaluation involved pre- and post-test surveys, comparison groups, and focus groups. In both urban and rural test sites, results yielded either mixed or negative effects on youth behaviors. Even at the two most effective urban sites, 11.5% and 25% of participating youth reported having engaged in sexual intercourse by post-test. One rural site reported attitudes towards abstinence declined while the proportion of students “who experienced sexual intercourse for the first time” increased and “only about half of these sexually active youth used any form of contraception.”<sup>17</sup>

The focus groups revealed young people’s frustration with a lack of information surrounding contraception and the lack of respect for their ability to make decisions.<sup>18</sup> The authors of the study conclude that “this initiative was largely ineffective in reducing sexual onset and promoting attitudes and skills consistent with sexual abstinence.”<sup>19</sup>

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

There are five CBAE grantees in Pennsylvania: HOPE Worldwide, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations, Rape and Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County, and To Our Children’s Future with Health, Inc. There are three AFLA grantees in Pennsylvania: The Wellness Center/ Crozer-Chester Medical Center (receives two grants), Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh, and To Our Children with Health.

HOPE Worldwide was founded by the International Churches of Christ in 1991. It has a “Positive Choice Program” centered on abstinence-only-until-marriage and prevention of drug and alcohol use.<sup>20</sup>

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

<b>Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee</b>  <b>Length of Grant</b>	<b>Amount of Grant</b>	<b>Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)</b>
Pennsylvania Department of Health  <a href="http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/site/default.asp">www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/site/default.asp</a>	\$1,693,422 federal	Title V
Rape and Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County  2006–2011	\$567,138	CBAE
To Our Children’s Future with Health, Inc.  2005–2008  DUAL GRANTEE  2002–2007  <a href="http://www.tocfwh.org">www.tocfwh.org</a>	\$485,524   \$485,524	CBAE   AFLA
The Wellness Center/ Crozer-Chester Medical Center  2002–2007  DUAL GRANTEE  2002–2007	\$234,337   \$154,194	AFLA   AFLA

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee  Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh  2002–2007  <a href="http://www.mercylink.org">www.mercylink.org</a>	\$225,000	AFLA

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

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 Bureau of Family Health  
 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Wing  
 Health & Welfare Building  
 Harrisburg, PA 17108  
 Phone: (717) 772-2763

**Pennsylvania Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

ACLU of Pennsylvania  
 P.O. Box 40008  
 Philadelphia, PA 19006  
 Phone: (215) 592-1513  
[www.aclupa.org](http://www.aclupa.org)

Adagio Health  
 960 Penn Ave., Suite 600  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
 Phone: (412) 288-2130  
[www.adagiohealth.org](http://www.adagiohealth.org)

Family Health Council of Central  
 Pennsylvania  
 3461 Market St., Suite 200  
 Camp Hill, PA 17011  
 Phone: (717) 761-7380  
[www.fhccp.org](http://www.fhccp.org)

The Family Planning Council  
 260 South Broad St., Suite 1000  
 Philadelphia, PA 19102  
 Phone: (215) 985-2600  
[www.familyplanning.org](http://www.familyplanning.org)

NARAL Pro-Choice Pennsylvania  
 P.O. Box 58174  
 Philadelphia, PA 19102  
 Phone: (215) 546-4666  
[www.prochoicepennsylvania.org](http://www.prochoicepennsylvania.org)

Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen  
 Pregnancy  
 200 Strawberry Square  
 Harrisburg, PA 17101  
 Phone: (717) 236-3366  
[www.pcptp.org](http://www.pcptp.org)

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Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates 300 North 2 <sup>nd</sup> St., Suite 400 Harrisburg, PA 17101 Phone: (717) 234-3024 <a href="http://www.plannedparenthoodpa.org">www.plannedparenthoodpa.org</a>	Statewide Pennsylvania Rights Coalition 30 Forgedale Rd. Fleetwood, PA 19522 Phone: (717) 920-9537 <a href="http://www.sparc-pa.org">www.sparc-pa.org</a>
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**Pennsylvania Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Pennsylvania Family Institute  
23 North Front St.  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
Phone: (717) 545-0600  
[www.pafamily.org](http://www.pafamily.org)

Pennsylvanians for Human Life  
590 Snyder Ave.  
West Chester, PA 19382  
Phone: (610) 696-0780  
[www.pennlife.org](http://www.pennlife.org)

Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation  
4800 Jonestown Rd., Suite 102  
Harrisburg, PA 17109  
Phone: (717) 541-0034  
[www.paprolife.org](http://www.paprolife.org)

People for Life  
1625 West 26<sup>th</sup> St.  
P.O. Box 1126  
Erie, PA 16512  
Phone: (814) 459-1333  
[www.peopleforlife.org](http://www.peopleforlife.org)

**Newspapers in Pennsylvania**

*Bucks County Courier Times*  
Tom Haines  
Health & Medicine Editor  
8400 Route 13  
Levittown, PA 19057  
Phone: (215) 949-4201

*Erie Times-News*  
Jeff Hileman  
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*The Morning Call*  
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*The Morning Call*  
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*The Patriot-News*  
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812 Market St.  
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*The Patriot-News*  
David Wenner  
Health & Medicine Reporter  
P.O. Box 2265  
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*Philadelphia Inquirer*  
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*Tribune-Review*  
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 Greensburg, PA 15601  
 Phone: (724) 837-4013

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

<sup>2</sup> “Local School Board Member Accused of Using Gay Slur,” *The Pittsburgh Channel*, 17 November 2006, accessed 20 November 2006, <<http://www.thepittsburghchannel.com/news/10347565/detail.html>>; Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, “GLSEN Outraged by Pennsylvania School Board Member’s Alleged Gay Slur,” 16 November 2006, accessed 6 December 2006, <<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2012.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

<sup>4</sup> Larissa Theodore, “Ambridge Considers Diversity Training,” *Beaver County Times*, 21 December 2006, accessed 2 January 2006, <[http://www.timesonline.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17617131&BRD=2305&PAG=461&dept\\_id=478569&rfi=6](http://www.timesonline.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17617131&BRD=2305&PAG=461&dept_id=478569&rfi=6)>.

<sup>5</sup> Jim McCaffrey, “SRC Bitterly Clashes Over Gay History Month,” *Evening Bulletin*, 13 October 2006, accessed 17 October 2006, <[http://www.theeveningbulletin.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17323979&BRD=2737&PAG=461&dept\\_id=576361&rfi=6](http://www.theeveningbulletin.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17323979&BRD=2737&PAG=461&dept_id=576361&rfi=6)>.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Snyder, “Gay History Month Sparks District Wide Debate,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 September 2006, accessed 1 October 2006, <[http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/counties/philadelphia\\_county/philadelphia/15624842.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp](http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/counties/philadelphia_county/philadelphia/15624842.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp)>.

<sup>7</sup> McCaffrey.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ceci Connolly, “Federal Funds for Abstinence Group Withheld,” *Washington Post*, 23 August 2005, A05.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *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>>.

<sup>14</sup> *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](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf)>.

<sup>15</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 26 January 2007, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>>. Pennsylvania did not participate in either the 2005 or 2003 YRBS but Philadelphia participated in the 2003 YRBS.

<sup>16</sup> Debra Hauser, *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact* (Washington, D.C.: Advocates for Youth, 2004), 16.

<sup>17</sup> E. Smith, et al., *Evaluation of the Pennsylvania Abstinence Education and Related Services Initiative: 1998-2002* (Philadelphia, PA: Maternal and Child Health Bureau of Family Health, Pennsylvania Department of Health, January 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>20</sup> “Funding Received for ‘Positive Choice’ Abstinence Education Program,” HOPE Worldwide, 25 September 2004 (2001), accessed 24 January 2007, <<http://www.hopeww.org/home/2004/09/positive.htm>>.