



RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Rhode Island schools are required to provide “accurate information and instruction” on sexuality, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).¹ Schools must also teach “the responsibilities of family membership and adulthood, including issues related to reproduction, abstinence, dating and dating violence, marriage, and parenthood as well as information about sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality and sexual orientation.”² These classes must stress abstinence.

In addition, the state’s department of elementary and secondary education must “establish comprehensive AIDS ... instruction, which shall provide students with accurate information and instruction on AIDS transmission and prevention, and which course shall also address abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred means of prevention, as a basic education program requirement.”³

The commissioner of elementary and secondary education must establish a state health education curriculum for grades kindergarten through 12. Schools are required to use this curriculum, *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs*, which is based on the *Comprehensive Health Instructional* and the *Health Education Framework*.

Parents must be notified of sexuality education classes and may view the curriculum by submitting a written request. Students may be removed from instruction by written notification from the parent to the principal.⁴ This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Rhode Island General Laws §§ 16-1-5, 16-22-17, and 16-22-18; as well as the *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs*, *Comprehensive Health Instructional*, and the *Health Education Framework*

Recent Legislation

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

Rhode Island’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁵

- In 2009, 43% of female high school students and 46% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 46% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2009, 2% of female high school students and 8% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 3% of female high school students and 8% of male high school students nationwide.

R H O D E I S L A N D

- In 2009, 9% of female high school students and 14% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 11% of female high school students and 16% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2009, 33% of female high school students and 32% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 36% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2009, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 55% of females and 68% of males in Rhode Island reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 54% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2009, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 26% of females and 17% of males in Rhode Island reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 23% of females and 16% of males nationwide.
- In 2009, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 15% of females and 21% of males in Rhode Island reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 17% of females and 26% of males nationwide.
- In 2009, 87% of high school students in Rhode Island reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 87% of high school students nationwide.

Rhode Island Youth Sexual Health Statistics

Teen Pregnancy, Birth, and Abortion

- Rhode Island's teen pregnancy rate ranks 27th in the U.S., with a rate of 62 pregnancies per 1,000 young women ages 15–19 compared to the national rate of 70 pregnancies per 1,000.⁶ There were a total of 2,220 pregnancies among young women ages 15–19 reported in 2005, the most recent year for which data are available, in Rhode Island.⁷
- Rhode Island's teen birth rate ranked 39th in the U.S. in 2005, with a rate of 31.4 births per 1,000 young women ages 15–19 compared to the national rate of 40.5 births per 1,000.⁸ In 2005, there were a total of 1,117 live births reported to young women ages 15–19 in Rhode Island.⁹
- In 2006, the U.S. teen birth rate increased for the first time in 15 years by 3% from 40.5 to 41.9 births per 1,000 young women ages 15–19, after having steadily declined between 1991 and 2005.¹⁰ In contrast, Rhode Island's teen birth rate decreased 11% between 2005 and 2006, from 31.4 to 27.8 births per 1,000 young women ages 15–19.¹¹
- Rhode Island's teen abortion rate ranks 5th in the U.S., with a rate of 22 abortions per 1,000 young women ages 15–19 compared to the national rate of 19 abortions per 1,000. In 2005, there were a total of 850 abortions reported among young women ages 15–19 in Rhode Island.¹²

HIV and AIDS

- Rhode Island ranks 38th in cases of HIV infection diagnosed in the U.S. among all age groups. In 2007, there were a total of 67 new cases of HIV infection diagnosed in Rhode Island.¹³
- Rhode Island's AIDS rate ranks 30th in the U.S., with a rate of 6.2 cases per 100,000 population compared to the national rate of 12.5 cases per 100,000.¹⁴
- Rhode Island ranks 42nd in number of reported AIDS cases in the U.S. among all age groups. In 2007, there were a total of 66 new AIDS cases reported in Rhode Island.¹⁵
- Rhode Island ranks 29th in number of reported AIDS cases in the U.S. among young people ages 13–19. In 2007, there were a total of 2 AIDS cases reported among young people ages 13–19 in Rhode Island.¹⁶

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- Rhode Island ranks 39th in reported cases of Chlamydia among young people ages 15–19 in the U.S., with an infection rate of 13.84 cases per 1,000 compared to the national rate of 19.51 cases per 1,000. In 2008, there were a total of 1,111 cases of Chlamydia reported among young people ages 15–19 in Rhode Island.¹⁷
- Rhode Island ranks 44th in reported cases of gonorrhea among young people ages 15–19 in the U.S., with an infection rate of 0.88 cases per 1,000 compared to the national rate of 4.52 cases per 1,000. In 2008, there were a total of 71 cases of gonorrhea reported among young people ages 15–19 in Rhode Island.¹⁸
- There are no available statewide data on the rate of syphilis among young people.

Comprehensive Approaches to Sex Education

SIECUS is not aware of any examples of model programs, policies, or best practices being implemented in Rhode Island public schools that provide a more comprehensive approach to sex education for young people.

We encourage you to submit any updated or additional information on comprehensive approaches to sex education being implemented in Rhode Island public schools for inclusion in future publications of the SIECUS State Profiles. Please visit SIECUS' "Contact Us" webpage at www.siecus.org to share information. Select "state policy" as the subject heading.

Federal Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs

Rhode Island did not receive abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2009.¹⁹

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until Marriage Funding

- Rhode Island chose not to participate in the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program in Fiscal Year 2009. The state was eligible for approximately \$165,277 in funding. Due to the expiration of the grant program on June 30, 2009, three months prior to the end of the federal fiscal year, the state would have received three quarters of the total funding allocated for the full fiscal year.

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) Funding

- There are no CBAE grantees in Rhode Island.

Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Funding

- There are no AFLA grantees in Rhode Island.

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Curricula

SIECUS is not aware of any commercially available abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula used in Rhode Island.

To read reviews of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula commonly used by federal grantees please visit the “Curricula and Speaker Reviews” webpage of SIECUS’ Community Action Kit at www.communityactionkit.org.

Adolescent Health Contact²⁰

Jan Shedd
Rhode Island Department of Health
Division of Family Health
3 Capitol Hill, Room 302
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 222-2312

Rhode Island Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Rhode Island
128 Dorrance Street, Suite 220
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
www.riaclu.org

AIDS Care Ocean State
18 Parkis Avenue
Providence, RI 02907
Phone: (401) 521-3603
www.aidscaresos.org

AIDS Project of Rhode Island
P.O. Box 6688
Providence, RI 02940
Phone: (401) 831-5522
www.aidsprojectri.org

Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Center
PFLAG of Rhode Island
500 Angell Street, Apartment #212
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 751-7571
www.pflagprovidence.org

PFLAG of Rhode Island
500 Angell Street, Apartment #212
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 751-7571
www.pflagprovidence.org

Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island
P.O. Box 41059
Providence, RI 02940
Phone: (421) 421-9620
www.ppri.org

Rhode Island Alliance for Lesbian and Gay
Civil Rights
P.O. Box 5758, Weybosset Hill Station
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 521-GAYS

Rhode Island National Organization
for Women
P.O. Box 8413
Warwick, RI 02888
www.rinow.org

Rhode Island Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CareNet Rhode Island
245 Phoenix Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920
Phone: (401) 941-4357
www.carenetri.org

Rhode Island Right to Life
266 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 521-1860
www.rirtl.org

Newspapers in Rhode Island²¹

The Call
Newsroom
75 Main Street
Woonsocket, RI 02895
Phone: (401) 767-3000
www.woonsocketcall.com

The Newport Daily News
Newsroom
Box 402
101 Malbone Road
Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 849-3300
www.newportdailynews.com

The Providence Journal-Bulletin
Newsroom
75 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02902
Phone: (401) 277-7303
www.projo.com

The Times
Newsroom
23 Exchange Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
Phone: (401) 722-4000
www.pawtuckettimes.com

Political Blogs in Rhode Island

Closing Argument
www.rijustice.wordpress.com

Hard Deadlines
www.torvex.com/jmcdaid

RIFuture.org
www.rifuture.org

Projo Politics
www.politicsblog.projo.com

¹ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-22-17(a).

² *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs* (Rhode Island: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Rhode Island Department of Health, proposed 2008), accessed 14 April 2010, <http://www.thriveri.org/documents/Rules_Regs_School_Health_2008.pdf>, 5.1.7.

³ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-22-17(a).

⁴ R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-22-18(b) and (c).

⁵ Danice K. Eaton, et. al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2009,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 59, no. SS-5 (4 June 2010): 98–109, accessed 4 June 2010, <<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5905.pdf>>.

⁶ *U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births, and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*, (Washington, DC: Guttmacher Institute, January 2010), accessed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends.pdf>>, Table 3.1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Table 3.2.

- ⁸ Joyce A. Martin, et. al, “Births: Final Data for 2006,” *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 57, number 7 (Hyattsville, MD: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7 January 2009), accessed 5 March 2010, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_07.pdf>, Table B.
- ⁹ U.S. *Teenage Pregnancies, Births, and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*, Table 12.
- ¹⁰ Martin, et. al, “Births: Final Data for 2006,” 4.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, Table B.
- ¹² U.S. *Teenage Pregnancies, Births, and Abortions: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*, Table 3.5.
- ¹³ “Cases of HIV Infection and AIDS in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2007,” *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, vol. 19, (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, February 2009), accessed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2007report/pdf/2007SurveillanceReport.pdf>>, Table 18.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*; “AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, All Ages, 2007,” (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation), accessed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparetable.jsp?ind=513&cat=11&sub=120&yr=62&typ=1&sort=a>>.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Table 16.
- ¹⁶ Slide 15: “Reported AIDS Cases among Adolescents 13 to 19 Years of Age, 2007—United States and Dependent Areas,” *HIV/AIDS Surveillance in Adolescents and Young Adults (through 2007)*, (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 2009), accessed 25 March 2010, <<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/slides/adolescents/index.htm>>.
- ¹⁷ “Wonder Database: Selected STDs by Age, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender, 1996-2008 Results,” (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), 30 June 2009, accessed 5 March 2010, <<http://wonder.cdc.gov>>; see also Table 10: “Chlamydia: Reported Cases and Rates Per 100,000 Population by Age Group and Sex: United States, 2004–2008,” *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2008*, (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of STD Prevention, November 2009), accessed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats08/surv2008-Complete.pdf>>, 95.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*; see also Table 20: “Gonorrhea—Reported Cases and Rates per 100,000 Population by Age Group and Sex: United States, 2004–2008,” *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2008*, 106.
- ¹⁹ This refers to the federal government’s fiscal year, which begins on October 1st and ends on September 30th. The fiscal year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, Fiscal Year 2009 began on October 1, 2008 and ended on September 30, 2009.
- ²⁰ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.
- ²¹ This section is a list of major newspapers in your state with contact information for their newsrooms. This list is by no means inclusive and does not contain the local level newspapers which are integral to getting your message out to your community. SIECUS strongly urges you to follow stories about the issues that concern you on the national, state, and local level by using an internet news alert service such as [Google alerts](#), becoming an avid reader of your local papers, and establishing relationships with reporters who cover your issues. For more information on how to achieve your media goals visit the SIECUS [Community Action Kit](#).