



RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island received \$569,071 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Rhode Island Sexuality Education Law

Rhode Island schools are required to provide “accurate information and instruction” on sexuality, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Abstinence must be stressed as the “preferred means of protection.”

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

See Rhode Island Statute 16-22-17 and 16-22-18.

Recent Legislation

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

Events of Note

*High School Principal Pulls Story on Homosexuality from School Paper
Westerly, RI; March 2003*

A story about the gay and lesbian community at Westerly High School that included interviews with high school students who identified themselves as gay or lesbian was pulled from a second printing of the school paper. The story was published in the first printing of the school paper, which is distributed in school. However, the principal decided to pull it from the second printing, which is done in coordination with a local paper and distributed throughout the community.

The principal said, “I don’t have a problem with the content. The issues are appropriate for young people to discuss. It’s the protection of high school students I’m concerned with. I would have preferred that the names be left out, especially because it’s being distributed to the whole public.”² He encouraged the high school students to write instead an article that discusses a wider diversity of minority groups at the high school.

Despite their desire to have the story published, the high school students who work on the paper appeared to understand the decision. The student editor said, “I understand [his] reasons for withholding it. Ideally, any student paper would wish to have our say, but I understand that we’re a student paper and there has to be some higher authority.”³

Rhode Island's Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁴

- In 2003, 42% of female high school students and 47% of male high school students in Rhode Island reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 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 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 7% of female high school students and 15% 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 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 31% of female high school students and 31% 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 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 16% of females and 26% of males in Rhode Island 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, 57% of females and 70% of males in Rhode Island 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, 27% of females and 16% of males in Rhode Island 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, 3% of female high school students and 4% of male high school students in Rhode Island 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, 92% of high school students in Rhode Island reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, teens ages 15-19 accounted for 31% of the 3,000 total cases of Chlamydia reported in Rhode Island.⁵

- In 2003, teens ages 15-19 accounted for 29% of the 973 total cases of gonorrhea reported in Rhode Island.⁶
- In 2000, Rhode Island’s abortion rate was 23 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁷
- In 2002, Rhode Island’s birth rate was 36 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.⁸

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Rhode Island received \$168,811 in 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 Rhode Island, the federal funding is matched with \$126,608 in state funding. The federal funding is divided among four community based organizations and is used to target male role models through a program called *Men 2B*. The state funding supports a media campaign entitled *Be There For Teens* which supplements the work of *Men 2B*.

Men 2B trains men in high-risk communities to be role models. Each of the four programs involves a minimum of 40 men who attend at least 16 hours of training on topics such as adolescent development, communication skills, boundary setting, the role of men in society and the family, and resources for youth who need help with additional problems.

The *Be There For Teens* media campaign targets men and women who are at least 20 years old. The goal is to portray a positive image of youth and stress the positive impact that adult-youth relationships can have.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)⁹ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

Rhode Island has one SPRANS–CBAE grantee: Heritage of Rhode Island. There are no AFLA grantees in Rhode Island.

Heritage of Rhode Island is affiliated with Heritage Community Services of South Carolina and uses Heritage Keepers, a character-based curriculum that it designed. SIECUS’ review of this program found that it relied on fear and shame and contained biased messages about gender and non-traditional family structures.

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2004

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant Rhode Island Department of Health www.health.state.ri.us	\$168,811 federal \$126,608 state	Title V
Dawn for Children	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant Diocese of Providence: Project Hope/ Proyecto Esperanza	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
New Visions for Newport County Inc.	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
Urban League of Rhode Island	\$37,431	Title V sub-grantee
Heritage of Rhode Island 2004-2007	\$400,260	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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

Rhode Island Organization that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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

AIDS Project of RI
232 West Exchange St.
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-5522
www.aidsprojectri.org

PFLAG Providence
500 Angell St., Apt. 212
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 751-7571
www.gbwebworks.com/pflag

Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island
PO Box 41059
Providence, RI 02940
Phone: (421) 421-7820
www.ppri.org

Rhode Island Alliance for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights
PO Box 5758, Weybosset Hill Station
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 521-GAYS
members.aol.com/RIAlliance

Rhode Island Gender Community
153 Ontario St.
Providence, RI 02907
Phone: (401) 273-0996
www.rigc.org

Rhode Island NOW
PO Box 8413
Warwick, RI 02888
www.rinow.org

Rhode Island Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CareNet
744 Park Ave.
Cranston, RI 02910
Phone: (401) 941-4357
www.carenetri.org

Christian Coalition of RI
PO Box 6631
Central Falls, RI 02863
Phone: (401) 729-4677

RI Right to Life
266 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 521-1860

Newspapers in Rhode Island

The Call
Kathie Raleigh
Medical/Health Editor
75 Main St.
Woonsocket, RI 02895
Phone: (401) 767-8555

The Newport Daily News
Wendy Fontaine
Education Reporter
101 Malbone Rd.
Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 849-3300

The Providence Journal
Felice Freyer
Health & Medicine Editor
75 Fountain St.
Providence, RI 02902
Phone: (401) 277-7397

The Providence Journal
Robert Whitcomb
Editorial Page Editor
75 Fountain St.
Providence, RI 02902
Phone: (401) 277-7433

The Times
Debbie Ryan
Medical/Health Editor
23 Exchange St.
Pawtucket, RI 02860
Phone: (401) 722-4000

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 T. Ryan, "Principal Pulls Story about Gays from School Newspaper," *The Sun Staff (Westerly, RI)*, 14 March 2003.

³ Ibid.

⁴ 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/yrbbs/>>.

⁵ *Reported Cases of Chlamydia, Rhode Island, 1999-2003*, Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Communicable Diseases, accessed 7 February 2005, <<http://www.health.ri.gov/disease/communicable/chlamydia.pdf>>.

⁶ Ibid.

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

⁸ *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>>.

⁹ 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).