



TENNESSEE

Tennessee received \$4,434,325 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Tennessee Sexuality Education Law

Tennessee Code forbids the teaching of any sexuality education class unless it has been approved by the state board of education and the local school board, and is taught by instructors deemed to be qualified by the local school board. Any course in sexuality education must “include presentations encouraging abstinence from sexual intercourse during the teen and pre-teen years.” The Code allows teachers to answer any questions that are initiated by students. Violation of this rule is considered a Class C misdemeanor.

If any county in Tennessee has pregnancy rates higher than 19.5 pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 15-17, then every school district in that county must implement family life education in accordance with curriculum guidelines provided by the state board of education. This education must emphasize abstinence-until-marriage and must include HIV/AIDS- and sexually transmitted disease (STD)-prevention.

According to Tennessee Code, “in developing the plan, the state board shall consider such programs and materials as ‘Sex Respect,’ ‘Teen-Aid,’ and the ‘3-R Project’ of the South Carolina departments of education and health.”

The plan for curriculum development includes building community and parental support for family life education. At least one public hearing must be held. If, upon implementation of family life education in a school district, more than 50 parents or guardians with children enrolled in the school district complain about the program, the state department of education must audit the school district “for the purpose of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the plan of family life instruction.” The state department of education must then recommend how to make the instruction more effective and how to build parental and community support for the program.

In addition, school districts may use health care professionals and social workers to assist in family life education. Such instructors must be individuals “upright of character and of good public standing.”

Family life education must be taught for four years after the release of the initial teen pregnancy rates. If the school district fails to implement family life education, then the county must do so. If the school board does not implement family life education, the commissioner of education for the state is instructed to withhold state funding.

According to Tennessee law, HIV/AIDS-prevention courses may not be required for graduation. In addition, all instruction and materials related to HIV/AIDS prevention must place

“primary emphasis on abstinence from premarital intimacy and on the avoidance of drug abuse in controlling the spread of AIDS.”

Tennessee Code allows students to be removed from sexuality education classes upon written request of their parent or guardian. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Tennessee Code Sections 49-6-1005, 49-6-1008, 49-6-1301, 49-6-1302, and 49-6-1303.

Recent Legislation

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

Events of Note

Sexuality Education Teacher Comes Under Fire for Comments
June 2003; Clarksville, TN

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School District dropped charges against a Richview Middle School health teacher after the teacher was accused of making “statements that were inappropriate with regard to race, gender and sex acts.” The comments were made after showing an abstinence video entitled *Sex, Lies, and Truth* to her seventh-grade class in February 2003.² Although the specific comments have not been made public, the charges against the teacher included incompetence, inefficiency, neglect of duty, unprofessional conduct, and insubordination.³

The school system agreed to reassign her to an elementary school if she completed a training program. The school’s director said, “the school system is committed to ensuring students receive quality instruction, while making every effort to give employees the opportunity to correct errors in judgment. We believe this action will accomplish both of those goals.”⁴

Past job evaluations of the teacher showed a strong performance record over her 30-year career at six area schools.

Tennessee’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁵

- In 2003, 49% of female high school students and 52% of male high school students in Tennessee reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2003, 4% of female high school students and 11% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 13% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 37% of female high school students and 34% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 17% of females and 26% of males in Tennessee 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, 53% of females and 66% of males in Tennessee 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, 20% of females and 12% of males in Tennessee 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, 7% of female high school students and 4% of male high school students in Tennessee 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, 90% of high school students in Tennessee reported having been taught about HIV/AIDS in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.
- In 2000, Tennessee's abortion rate was 16 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.⁶
- In 2002, Tennessee's birth rate was 54 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.⁷

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Tennessee received \$630,355 in federal 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 Tennessee, the full state match is provided by sub-grantees. The Tennessee Department of Health oversees this funding, runs a state-wide media campaign, and awards grants to 22 sub-grantees. The media campaign focuses on parent-child communication about the importance of remaining abstinent before marriage.

The 22 sub-grantees target youth ages 10-17 and their parents by running local media campaigns and other activities, including in-school programs. They use a variety of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula, including *Sex Can Wait*, *Choices*, *Smart Moves*, *Postponing Sexual Involvement*, and *Sex Respect*.

SIECUS reviewed *Sex Respect* and found that in order to convince students to remain abstinent until marriage, the curriculum presents opinions and beliefs as universal truths; relies on messages of fear and shame; provides outdated and inaccurate medical information; and portrays a biased view of gender, marriage, family structure, pregnancy options, sexual orientation, and race and social class. The format and underlying biases of the curriculum do not allow for cultural, community, and individual values, and discourage critical thinking or discussions of alternate points of view in the classroom. For example, *Sex Respect* advises: "set

ending time for your date before you go out. Be home on time. Don't invite your date in. Lead yourselves not into temptation.”⁸

One of the sub-grantees, A Woman's Place, supports the Middle Tennessee Nurses for Health Education (MTNHE). MTNHE does presentations in middle schools, high schools, and youth groups that focus on fetal development, STD statistics, and character development. MTNHE reports that 26% of the youth they reach with their abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are sexually active.⁹ Another group of nurses also receives Title V funding; the Blount Nurses for Health Education (BNHE) emphasize fear and shame in their abstinence-only-until-marriage message. Their website lists some of the “permanent life changes” that have “ruined” young people's lives as a result of their decisions to have sex in their teen years. Those changes include:

INFECTIONS, which cause death (examples: AIDS and hepatitis);
 PREGNANCIES, which leave young women agonizing over whether to:
 Become unmarried single moms, typically living in poverty and giving up any plans to go to college, or
 Kill their unborn children, through abortions, and
 GUILT, by having cheapened the sexual union between husband and wife through misuse of the greatest gift a person can give his or her spouse on the wedding night—purity and totally committed love, with no remorse or emotional baggage.¹⁰

The BNHE also misinform their audience about critical topics such as HIV transmission and condom effectiveness. For example, on the website they purport that HIV can be spread by “blood or secretions from an infected person coming into contact with another person's skin.” In addition BNHE warns that “small viruses may pass through tiny defects in the latex” of condoms.¹¹

There is no evaluation of the sub-grantees' programs or the media campaign.

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance—Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)¹² and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are six SPRANS–CBAE grantees in Tennessee: AAA Women's Services, Inc./ Why Know Abstinence Education Program (receives two grants), Centerstone Community Mental Health Centers, Inc. (receives two grants), Christ Community Medical Clinic, Inc., Creative Life, Inc., Hope Resource Center, and Life Choices, Inc. There is one AFLA grantee: Break the Cycle.

According to AAA Women's Services, Inc.'s website, it teaches the *Why kNOw Abstinence Education Program* in 24 Tennessee counties, 19 states, and six foreign countries. The program has courses for middle school and high school students as well as for Christian schools and churches. The in-class instruction is supplemented by a voluntary after-school group as well as a drama group called *One Night Stand*.

The Christian-based curriculum emphasizes themes such as sexual purity and being made in the image of God. In this curriculum, sex is described as sinful. Unit titles include, “Why It Is Not Good For a Man to Be Alone,” “The Devastation of Buying The Lie,” “Setting Standards in a World Gone Mad,” and “Taking a Stand for Purity.” Marriage, family, and children are emphasized as being the ultimate goal of a healthy civilization.

T E N N E S S E E

The curriculum used in public schools emphasize goal setting and refusal skills, STDs, the influence of media and peer pressure, and the progressive and addictive nature of sex. It also focuses on gender expectations and the hope of a second virginity.

Life Choices, Inc., another grantee, describes itself as a Christian organization that counsels on Biblical principles. The website emphasizes a ruined reputation as one of the consequences of premarital sex. It goes on to provide hints for avoiding sex such as not spending too much time parking or sitting on the couch in the dark. Instead, the website suggests staying in public areas with your date and carefully choosing movies viewed during a date so as not to be influenced to have sex.

The website also includes information on abortion and adoption. The abortion section emphasizes the possible negative emotional consequences of abortion, including “Post Abortion Stress Syndrome.” The organization suggests that there is a high rate of “Post Abortion Stress Syndrome” and attributes this to the assertion that many women are “forced to have an abortion.” It then suggests support groups and Bible study as a way to overcome grief.

Life Choices, Inc. is also a state-licensed adoption agency. Couples must be of the same local “Bible-believing” church and must sign doctrinal and pro-life statements before qualifying as adoptive parents.

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Tennessee Department of Health www2.state.tn.us/health/MCH/abstinenceeducation.htm	\$630,355 federal	Title V
A Women’s Place www.maurywebpages.com/awp.htm	\$29,400	Title V sub-grantee
Blount Nurses for Health Education www.ywwf.org	\$43,500	Title V sub-grantee
Boys and Girls Club of Pulaski	\$7,700	Title V sub-grantee
Boys and Girls Club of Tennessee Valley	\$43,500	Title V sub-grantee

T E N N E S S E E

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Boys to Men, Inc. Right for Me Program	\$65,200	Title V sub-grantee
Break the Cycle	\$38,800	Title V sub-grantee
DUAL GRANTEE www.kornet.org/bkcycle	\$175,000	AFLA
Catholic Charities of Tennessee www.cctenn.org	\$121,900	Title V sub-grantee
Children and Family Services www.diane.tnstate.edu/Dircov.htm	\$38,900	Title V sub-grantee
Concerned Neighbors United	\$15,900	Title V sub-grantee
Creative Life, Inc. DUAL GRANTEE 2002-2005	\$63,600 \$580,957	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Hope Clinic for Women http://hopeclinicforwomen.org	\$47,200	Title V sub-grantee
Hope Resource Center DUAL GRANTEE 2003-2006 www.hoperc.org	\$67,900 \$317,282	Title V sub-grantee SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Jackson-Madison Co. Schools	\$14,500	Title V sub-grantee

T E N N E S S E E

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
LaBonheur Center for Children and Parents www.lebonheur.org/Centerfor_Children_and_Parents.222.0.html	\$45,200	Title V sub-grantee
Moccasin Bend Girl Scout Council, Inc www.mbgsc.org	\$37,600	Title V sub-grantee
REACHS www.tnpca.org/hcenters/reachs.htm	\$89,900	Title V sub-grantee
Refuge Temple Church Ministries	\$37,400	Title V sub-grantee
St. Andrews AME Church	\$48,900	Title V sub-grantee
Somali Community Center of Nashville www.somalinashville.org	\$49,100	Title V sub-grantee
Warren Co. Schools and Health Services www.warrenschoools.com	\$60,600	Title V sub-grantee
Women's Care Center	\$43,100	Title V sub-grantee

T E N N E S S E E

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
AAA Women’s Services, Inc./ <i>Why kNOw Abstinence Education Program</i> 2001-2004 DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2007 www.whyknow.org	\$254,530 \$474,855	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant) SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Centerstone Community Mental Health Centers, Inc. 2004-2007 DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2007 www.centerstone.org	\$74,067 \$781,000	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant) SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Christ Community Medical Clinic, Inc. 2002-2005 www.cchf.org	\$611,940	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Life Choices, Inc. 2003-2006 www.life-choices.org	\$534,339	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

Yvette Mack
Tennessee Department of Health
Maternal and Child Health Section
5th Floor, Cordell Hull Building
425 5th Ave., N
Nashville, TN 37219
Phone: (615) 741-7353

Tennessee Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

American Civil Liberties Union of
Tennessee
PO Box 120160
Nashville, TN 37212
Phone: (615) 320-7142
www.aclu-tn.org

Knoxville Chapter of NOW
PO Box 5332
Knoxville, TN 37928
Phone: (865) 281-8075
www.kornet.org/knoxnow

Tennessee Association of Planned
Parenthood Affiliates
50 Vantage Way, Suite 102
Nashville, TN 37228
Phone: (615) 345-0952

Tennessee Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, Southeast
PO Box 20115
Knoxville, TN 37940
Phone: (865) 609-9033
<http://abortionno.org/CBRSoutheast/>

Tennessee Right to Life
State Central Office
4802 Charlotte Ave.
Nashville, TN 37209
Phone: (877) 246-6735
www.tennesseerighttolife.org

Newspapers in Tennessee

The Chattanooga Times & Free Press
Clint Cooper
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 1447
Chattanooga, TN 37401
Phone: (423) 757-6497

The City Paper
Craig Boerner
Community News Writer
1 Burton Hills Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37215
Phone: (615) 298-9833

T E N N E S S E E

The Commercial Appeal
Mary Powers
Health & Medicine Reporter
PO Box 334
Memphis, TN 38101
Phone: (901) 529-2383

The Commercial Appeal
Peggy Reisser-Winburne
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 334
Memphis, TN 38101
Phone: (901) 529-2372

The Daily Times
Iva Butler
Community News Editor
307 E. Harper Ave.
Maryville, TN 37804
Phone: (865) 981-3142

The Jackson Sun
Jamie Page
Community News Reporter
245 W. Lafayette St.
Jackson, TN 38301
Phone: (731) 425-9643

Johnson City Press
James Brooks
Community News Senior Reporter
204 W. Main St.
Johnson City, TN 37604
Phone: (423) 929-3111

Kingsport Times-News
Teresa Hicks
Community News Reporter
701 Lynn Garden Dr.
Kingsport, TN 37660
Phone: (423) 392-1379

The Knoxville News Sentinel
Kristi Nelson
Health & Medicine Editor
PO Box 59038
Knoxville, TN 37950
Phone: (865) 342-6434

The Leaf-Chronicle
Maria McClure
Medical/Health Editor
200 Commerce St.
Clarksville, TN 37040
Phone: (931) 245-0203

The Tennessean
Susan Leathers
Health & Medicine Editor
1100 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37203
Phone: (615) 726-8964

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 C. Collins, "RMS Teacher Faces Dismissal," *The Leaf-Chronicle* (TN), 16 April 2003.

³ Ibid.

⁴ C. Collins, "Deal Halts Teacher's Dismissal," *The Leaf-Chronicle* (Clarksville, TN), 21 June 2003.

⁵ 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/yrrbs/>>.

⁶ *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>.

⁷ *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>>.

⁸ Colleen Kelly Mast, *Sex Respect-Student Workbook* (Bradley, IL: Respect Inc, 1997), 102.

⁹ Marvin Sugg, "Abstinence Education in Maury County is Working!" *The Daily Herald*, 20 February 2000, accessed 25 January 2005, <<http://www.maurywebpages.com/awp2.htm>>.

¹⁰ *You're Worth Waiting For*, Blount Nurses For Health Education, accessed 25 January 2005, <<http://www.ywwf.org/>>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² 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).