



### VERMONT

*Vermont received no federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.*<sup>1</sup>

#### **Vermont Sexuality Education Law and Policy**

The Vermont Education Code includes sexuality education as part of its comprehensive health program. This program must be taught in elementary and secondary schools. The comprehensive health program has 10 parts, four of which are related to sexuality:

- body structure and function, including the physical, psychosocial and psychological basis of human development, sexuality and reproduction;
- disease, such as HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as other communicable diseases, and the prevention of disease;
- family health and mental health, including instruction which promotes the development of responsible personal behavior involving decision-making about sexual activity including abstinence; skills which strengthen existing family ties involving communication, cooperation, and interaction between parents and students; and instruction to aid in the establishment of strong family life in the future, thereby contributing to the enrichment of the community; and
- human growth and development, including understanding the physical, emotional, and social elements of individual development and interpersonal relationships including instruction in parenting methods and styles. This shall include information regarding the possible outcomes of premature sexual activity, contraceptives, adolescent pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, and abortion.

Vermont's *Sample Comprehensive HIV Policy for Schools: Pre-K-12*, developed by the Department of Education, includes suggestions for HIV/AIDS-prevention curriculum and instruction. In addition, Vermont statute requires that "the commissioner [of education] with the approval of the state board shall establish an advisory council on comprehensive health education... The council shall assist the department of education in planning a program of comprehensive health education in the public schools."

Parents or guardians may remove their children from a sexuality education class if the content is in conflict with their religious beliefs. This is referred to as an "opt-out" policy.

See Vermont Statute, Title 16, Part 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter 7, Sections 131 through 135 and the *Sample Comprehensive HIV Policy for Schools: Pre-K-12*.

## Recent Legislation

### *Bills Aims to Amend Anti-Discrimination Laws*

House Bill 228, introduced in February 2007, would require the state's anti-discrimination statutes to include gender identity as a protected class. The bill defines gender identity as "an individual's actual or perceived gender identity, or gender-related characteristics intrinsically related to an individual's gender or gender identity, regardless of the individual's assigned sex at birth." The bill was sent to the House Committee on Judiciary on February 6, 2007.

### *Legislation to Require HPV Vaccine for Girls*

House Bill 256, introduced in February 2007, would require girls entering sixth grade to have received the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. Students may be exempt for religious or moral reasons, as long as the parents/guardians sign a statement acknowledging the receipt of information about the link between HPV and cervical cancer. The bill would also appropriate funds to the Vermont Department of Health for the purchase of HPV vaccines. The bill was sent to the House Committee on Human Services on February 8, 2007.

## Events of Note

### *Bullying Workshops Proceed Without Incident, Despite Some Detractors March 2007, Swanton, VT*

Controversy erupted in Swanton when Outright Vermont was invited into Mississquoi Valley Union High School by the school's gay-straight alliance (GSA) to present on the bullying and violence that LGBTQ young people often face.

Outright Vermont, a youth services organization "dedicated to improving the safety and health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer young people," has presented in other schools in Vermont. Administrators in Swanton sent a letter home to parents alerting them to the event and reminding parents that they could remove their children from the presentations if they had objections to its content. Parents were also invited to attend and assured that administrators would be present at all of the presentations.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, some parents, spurred on by a local conservative radio talk show host, attended a school board meeting to voice complaints about the presentation. "I know the gays have their rights, but what about the other children? There's got to be some other way," commented one parent. News reports estimated that the 75 attendees at the meeting were split evenly in support or opposition to the presentation.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these protest, the school board and the superintendent remained committed to the presentation. In fact, the board published an op-ed in the local paper explaining its reasons for bringing Outright VT. "We are dedicated to assuring that as much as possible, MVU is a safe and supportive place for all," the board wrote.<sup>4</sup>

The panel presentations took place in March 2007 in eleventh and twelfth grade English classes. The panelists included LGBTQ young people from high schools in the area and one young man from Takoma Park, Maryland. The presenters spoke mostly about their own coming out stories and the difficulties they faced as LGBTQ young people. Students responded well and asked many questions. "It really opened my eyes to some different things," said one junior. "We don't really tend to talk about these things a lot in society."<sup>5</sup>

**Vermont's Youth: Statistical Information of Note<sup>6</sup>**

- In 2007, 4% of female high school students and 7% of male high school students in Vermont 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 2007, 10% of female high school students and 13% of male high school students in Vermont reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 18% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 33% of female high school students and 31% of male high school students in Vermont 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 34% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 58% of females and 67% of males in Vermont reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 55% of females and 69% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 38% of females and 28% of males in Vermont reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 13% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 22% of females and 33% of males in Vermont reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 18% of females and 28% of males nationwide.

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

Although the Vermont Department of Health would have been eligible for \$69,885 in Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2007, the state did not receive these funds. The application submitted by the Vermont Department of Health was rejected by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) because it did not fully meet the requirements of the A-H definition of "abstinence education."

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. Because its application was rejected, however, Vermont did not receive funds, provide matching funds, or have organizations supported by this type of federal money in Fiscal Year 2007.

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

There are no CBAE or AFLA grantees in Vermont.

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**Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2007**

Vermont did not receive abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2007.

**Adolescent Health Contact<sup>7</sup>**

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108 Cherry St.  
Burlington, VT 05402  
Phone: (802) 652-4179

**Vermont Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

ACLU of Vermont  
137 Elm St.  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
Phone: (802) 223-6304  
[www.acluvt.org](http://www.acluvt.org)

Mountain Pride Media  
P.O. Box 1122  
Burlington, VT 05402  
Phone: (802) 861-6486  
[www.mountainpridemedia.org](http://www.mountainpridemedia.org)

Outright Vermont  
241 N. Winooski Ave.  
McClure Mutigenerational Building  
Burlington, VT 05402  
Phone: 1-800-GLB-CHAT  
[www.outrightvt.org](http://www.outrightvt.org)

Planned Parenthood of Northern New  
England  
183 Talcott Rd., Suite 101  
Williston, VT 05495  
Phone: 1-800-287-8188  
[www.ppnne.org](http://www.ppnne.org)

**Vermont Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Center for American Cultural Renewal  
P.O. Box 1566  
Rutland, VT 05701  
Phone: (802) 775-6247  
[www.cfacr.org](http://www.cfacr.org)

Vermont Right to Life Committee  
P.O. Box 1079  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
Phone: (802) 229-4885  
[www.vrlc.net](http://www.vrlc.net)

**Newspapers in Vermont<sup>8</sup>**

*The Burlington Free Press*  
Newsroom  
191 College St.  
Burlington, VT 05401  
Phone: (802) 660-1874  
[www.burlingtonfreepress.com](http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com)

*Rutland Herald*  
Newsroom  
27 Wales St.  
Rutland, VT 05701  
Phone: (802) 747-6133  
[www.rutlandherald.com](http://www.rutlandherald.com)

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*St. Albans Messenger*  
Newsroom  
281 N. Main St.  
Saint Albans, VT 05478  
Phone: (802) 524-9771  
[www.samessenger.com](http://www.samessenger.com)

*The Times Argus*  
Newsroom  
540 N. Main St.  
Barre, VT 05641  
Phone: (802) 479-0191  
[www.timesargus.com](http://www.timesargus.com)

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<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 2007 begins on October 1, 2006 and ends on September 30, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> "Gay Group's School Workshop on Bullying Assailed by Some Parents," *Washington Blade*, 23 February 2007, accessed 28 February 2007,

[www.washblade.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog\\_id=11573](http://www.washblade.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=11573).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "MVU School Directors Prepare For Outright Vermont," *St. Albans Messenger* (VT), 1 March 2007, accessed 8 March 2007, [http://www.samessenger.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=519&Itemid=46](http://www.samessenger.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=519&Itemid=46).

<sup>5</sup> "Inside Outright: Gay-lesbian group visits MVU," *St. Albans Messenger*, 8 March 2007, accessed 19 March 2007, [www.samessenger.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=600](http://www.samessenger.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=600).

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: Danice K. Eaton, et. al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2007," *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 57.SS-4 (6 June 2008), accessed 4 June 2008, <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

<sup>8</sup> 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](#).