



Vermont

Vermont received \$69,885 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2003.¹

Vermont Sexuality Education Law

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 ten parts, four of which are:

- 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, 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.

Local school districts may establish a “comprehensive health education community advisory council” to assist the school board in developing and deciding upon health curricula.

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

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 2003 begins on October 1, 2002 and ends on September 30, 2003.

See Vermont Statute, Title 16, Part 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter 7, Sections 131, 132, 133, 134, and 135.

Recent Legislation

The Vermont legislature carried bills over from the 2003 to the 2004 session. Vermont's legislative session ended on May 20, 2004.

Bill Requiring Parental Consent for Discussion of Sexual Issues Died

Vermont House Bill 291, introduced on February 25, 2003, would have prohibited the teaching of enumerated sexual issues to students in grades seven through 12 in public schools without written consent from a parent or guardian for each day that one of the subjects would be discussed. Further, the bill contained a notification procedure for parents including the date and time of instruction, the instructor's name, and a detailed description of the instruction to be given. The bill also prohibited the teaching of any of the enumerated subjects—among them homosexuality—to children in grades kindergarten through six.

House Bill 291 died at the end of the legislative session.

Events of Note

SIECUS is not aware of any events of note regarding sexuality education in Vermont.

Vermont's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²

- In 2003, 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 2003, 11% of female high school students and 11% of male high school students in Vermont 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, 33% of female high school students and 29% 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 35% of females and 34% of males nationwide.
- In 2003, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 21% of females and 31% of males in Vermont 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, 54% of females and 66% of males in Vermont reported having used condoms the last

² Unless otherwise cited, all statistical information comes from: J. Grunbaum, et. al., "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2003," *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 53, no.SS-2, May 21, 2004, pp. 1-95. Available online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/>.

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, 36% of females and 26% of males in Vermont 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, 4% of female high school students and 3% of male high school students in Vermont 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 2000, Vermont's abortion rate was 14 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.³
- In 2001, Vermont's birth rate was 24 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 45 per 1,000 nationwide.⁴

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Vermont received \$69,885 in federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2003. 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. Vermont matches the federal funding with \$52,698 in state funds. The Vermont Department of Health oversees the funding along with an advisory committee that includes Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, staff from Senator Jim Jeffords' (I) and Senator Patrick Leahy's (D) offices, as well as various schools throughout the state.

Vermont uses its funding for a statewide media campaign entitled *There For Me* that targets youth ages 10 to 14 and their parents. The goal of the campaign is to promote parent/child communication around risk-taking behaviors such as early sexual behavior and alcohol, specifically how drug and alcohol use increases vulnerability to sexual advances. This campaign emphasis point G of the federal A-H definition of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs: "teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances."

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

There are no SPRANS—CBAE or AFLA grantees in Vermont.

³ U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information, (New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute, February, 2004). Available online at www.guttmacher.org.

⁴ A. Papillo, et.al., *Facts at a Glance*, (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February, 2004).

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2003

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Length of Grant Vermont Department of Health www.healthyvermonters.info	\$69,885 federal/ \$52,698 state	Title V

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

Sally Kerschner
 Vermont Department of Health
 108 Cherry St.
 Burlington, VT 05402
 Phone: (802) 865-7707

Vermont Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

American Civil Liberties Union
 110 E. State St.
 Montpelier, VT 05602
 Phone: (802) 223-6304
members.aol.com/acluvt/home.html

Outright Vermont
 P.O. Box 5235
 Burlington, VT 05402
 Phone: (800) GLB-CHAT
www.outrightvt.org

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

Vermont Catholics for Free Conscience
 P.O. Box 135
 Middlebury, VT 05753
 Phone: (802) 388-4150

Vermont Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights
 P.O. Box 1078
 39 Bridge St.
 Richmond, VT 05477
 Phone: (802) 434-6486
www.mountainpridemedia.org

Vermont NARAL
 P.O. Box 1023
 Burlington, VT 05402
 Phone: (802) 658-0710

Vermont Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Center for American Cultural Renewal
P.O. Box 1566
Rutland, Vermont 05701
Phone: (802) 775-6247
www.cfacr.org/about.htm

Vermont Right to Life Committee, Inc.
P.O. Box 1079
Montpelier, Vermont 05601
Phone and Fax: (802) 229-4885
www.vrlc.net

Newspapers in Vermont

Bennington Banner
Assignment Editor
425 Main St.
Bennington, VT 05201
Phone: (802) 447-7567

Brattleboro Reformer
James Pentland
Medical/Health Editor
Black Mountain Rd.
Brattleboro, VT 53011
Phone: (802) 254-2311

The Burlington Free Press
Adam Silverman
Community News Reporter
191 College St.
Burlington, VT 05401
Phone: (802) 660-1854

The Caledonian-Record
Gail Pison-Montany
Medical/Health Editor
190 Federal St.
Saint Johnsbury, VT 05819
Phone: (802) 748-8121

Newport Daily Express
Faith Sargent
Community News Reporter
178 Hill St.
Newport, VT 05855
Phone: (802) 334-6568

Rutland Herald
John Dolan
Medical/Health Editor
27 Wales St.
Rutland, VT 05701
Phone: (802) 747-6133

St. Albans Messenger
Assignment Editor
281 N. Main St.
Saint Albans, VT 05478
Phone: (802) 524-9771

The Times Argus
Community News Reporter
540 N. Main St.
Barre, VT 05641
Phone: (802) 479-0191