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Washington received \$2,499,202 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2006.¹

Washington Sexuality Education Law and Policy

School districts in Washington are not required to implement comprehensive sexuality education; the decision to implement sex education or human sexuality instruction in schools is made by the local school board. When creating sex education or human sexuality instruction, Washington law states that school districts must involve parents and other community members “in the planning, development, evaluation and revision.” The law also requires every Washington public school that offers sexual health education to assure that instruction is medically and scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, appropriate for students regardless of race, gender, disability status, or sexual orientation, and includes information about abstinence and other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy. It also states that “abstinence may not be taught at the exclusion of other materials and instruction on contraceptives and disease prevention.”

Schools are required to teach sexually transmitted disease prevention. Schools are also required to teach HIV/AIDS-prevention education and emphasize abstinence as a prevention method. This instruction must be given at least once each school year beginning in the fifth grade and must “teach that condoms and other artificial means of birth control are not a certain means of preventing the spread of the AIDS virus and reliance on condoms puts a person at risk for exposure to the disease.” Information must be current and medically accurate. In order to verify medical accuracy, the Office on HIV/AIDS within the Washington State Department of Health must review and approve all HIV curricula and supporting materials.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health developed voluntary guidelines titled the *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*. These guidelines promote broad, comprehensive, positive sexuality education programs that provide information about both abstinence and contraception, and are consistent with characteristics of programs that have been rigorously evaluated using quantitative research and have shown to be effective in reducing risk-taking behaviors. Washington also provides a voluntary curriculum, *KNOW HIV/STD Prevention Curriculum*, for use in grades five through 12.

Parents or guardians may remove their children from HIV/AIDS-prevention education if they have attended one information session about the HIV/AIDS curriculum and presentation. If a school district chooses to provide sexuality education, parents may also remove their children from the class with written notification. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Revised Code of Washington Section 28A.230.020, 28A.230.070, 392-410-140, *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention*, and *KNOW HIV/STD Prevention Curriculum*.

Recent Legislation

Healthy Youth Act Introduced

House Bill 1297 and Senate Bill 5297, both introduced in January of 2007, require every public school that offers sexual health education to assure that instruction is medically and scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, appropriate for students regardless of race, gender, disability status, or sexual orientation, and includes information about abstinence and other methods of preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. It also states that “abstinence may not be taught at the exclusion of other materials and instruction on contraceptives and disease prevention.” It would allow parents to remove minors from such classes and requires the superintendent of public instruction to develop a resource list of sexual health education curricula. SB 5287 passed in the Washington Senate on March 7, 2007, and was sent to the House of Representatives for debate as a substitute for HB 1297. SB 5297 passed in the Washington State House of Representatives on April 11, 2007, and was signed into law by Governor Christine Gregoire.

Bill Creates Opt-In Policy

House Bill 3201, introduced in February 2006 and referred to the House Committee on Healthcare, would require parental consent in order for a student to participate in any instruction “relating to human sexuality.” HB 3201 outlines detailed instructions for schools to give to parents regarding human sexuality instruction and where schools may store sex education curriculum materials. It further provides for damages if a school does not follow these guidelines.

Legislation Bans Teaching of Sexual Orientation

Senate Bill 6876, introduced in January 2006 and referred to the Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12, and Higher Education, states that “the office of superintendent of public instruction shall not encourage or promote the teaching of sexual orientation.” The bill also criticizes materials published earlier by the office of the superintendent.

Events of Note

After Reexamination, Kelso Decides Against Abstinence-Only March 2006; Kelso, WA

After a review that lasted more than a year, the Kelso, WA school board decided in March 2006 that students deserved more comprehensive information about both abstinence and contraception. The school board president announced, “This is the continuation of the direction we set a year ago. We think this will improve the safety of our kids from a [sexually transmitted disease] standpoint. It’s going to be a good thing for Kelso.”²

Kelso had been using a curriculum that was adapted from the state-approved *KNOW HIV/STD Prevention Curriculum*, but included very limited information about contraception. One board member explained the need for a review by saying that the abstinence-only approach is out-of-date and “times have changed.” She explained, “Basically, I’m hoping we can do a little more in-depth.”³

When the policy first came up for review, some abstinence-only-until-marriage advocates from the local crisis pregnancy center attended board meetings and workshops, arguing that teaching about contraceptives was “aiming low.”⁴ Yet the board eventually decided to follow Washington’s new state guidelines for sexuality education. The voluntary *Guidelines for Sexual Health and Disease Prevention* developed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health promote abstinence but also include information on contraception, disease prevention, decision-making skills, and access to health care.

Now that the board has mandated following these guidelines, school staff will begin working to develop a curriculum that meets these standards. Upon completion, the materials will come before the board for approval and be made available to parents for review. Parents will also continue to have the option of removing their children from any lessons.

*High School GSA Becomes Anti-Discrimination Club to Appease Community
March 2006; Battle Ground, WA*

After receiving negative responses from the school board and community members, student proponents of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at Battle Ground High School instead decided to form an Anti-Discrimination Club.

In January 2006, the school board met with an attorney to discuss the possible legal options of prohibiting a GSA from forming at the high school. The attorney was very clear in stating that the law protects the club's right to exist: "If you start treating groups differently based on what they say, you run afoul of the First Amendment."⁵ Some parents, however, still voiced their disapproval of the club's formation. "I just think that trying to promote the agenda of homosexuality is a sin," one parent said.⁶

A few weeks later, the Associated Student Body suggested that the GSA expand its mission to include other groups in order to promote the same ideals but also appease some of the GSA's opponents. The club's president agreed with the idea of an Anti-Discrimination Club, stating that it "would be better for our community, for our school."⁷ The club was approved in March 2006.

*Survey Shows Majority of Washington Residents Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education
2004; WA*

The results of an Advocates for Youth statewide survey conducted through the Global Strategy Group showed that respondents overwhelmingly support comprehensive sexuality education. When asked whether they supported sexuality education courses being taught to high school age students, 97% of parents replied that they did. Similarly, 78% of parents reported that they thought it was appropriate to teach ninth and tenth graders about contraception, birth control, and condoms.⁸

Respondents also made it clear that they opposed federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that prohibit young people's access to "information about birth control and condoms for the prevention of pregnancy, STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), and HIV/AIDS."⁹ Nearly seven in 10 respondents opposed abstinence-only-until-marriage programs and 57% disagreed with the supposition that "giving young people information about birth control and condoms in schools sends a mixed message and encourages young people to have intercourse."¹⁰

"When we listen to the voices of parents, we hear a resounding call for honest sex education in our country's schools," commented James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth. "It's time for our policymakers—both at the national and state levels—to pull their heads out of the sand and fund programs that their citizens want—programs that work to protect teens' health and lives."¹¹

*High School Bans Book Because of Parents' Complaints
August 2004; Federal Way, WA*

The mother of a 15-year-old at Todd Beamer High School in Federal Way, WA, became upset after reading a portion of a novel assigned in her son's ninth-grade English class. The book, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, focuses on censorship during the Cultural Revolution in China and the passage in question deals with a character's first sexual experience.

The mother felt the passage was inappropriate subject matter for high school students and further objected when several students drew pictures of the scenes for a class assignment. The parent and five

others gathered 32 signatures on a petition and took their complaints to the school board. The parent also pulled her son from the class and filed a complaint against the teacher.

The book was on the school district's list of approved materials and had been taught the previous semester with no complaints. The teacher defended the book's value, saying that, "a healthy, well-adjusted 14- or 15-year-old would not have any difficulty handling the scene" and that he is concerned that "the expertise of the district's top professionals has been trumped by a narrow viewpoint."¹² Regarding the drawings, the teacher said, "I recall only three pictures that depicted the scene...Two were drawn with sensitivity and maturity. One was so subtle as not even to be noticeable. I would not characterize any of the three pictures as 'explicit' or 'graphic.'"¹³

The district review committee rejected the parent's challenge citing the novel's "artistic merit" and "sensitive treatment of sexual content."¹⁴ However, the decision was overruled by the superintendent and the book was pulled from the ninth grade reading list. The superintendent also ordered all of the following year's reading lists to be presented to the school board for advance approval and for the secondary schools' reading lists to be sent out to parents during the summer.

The school board is also considering drafting a "decency policy" to prohibit sexually explicit material in the classroom.

Washington's Youth: Statistical Information of Note

- In 2000, Washington's abortion rate was 26 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁵
- In 2002, women ages 15–19 accounted for 19% of the 25,446 total abortions performed in Washington.¹⁶
- In 2004, Washington's birth rate was 31 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 41 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁷
- In 2003, Washington's Chlamydia infection rate was 2,273 per 100,000 women ages 15–19 and 392 per 100,000 men ages 15–19.¹⁸
- In 2003, Washington's gonorrhea infection rate was 168 per 100,000 women ages 15–19¹⁹ and 109 per 100,000 men ages 15–19.²⁰

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Washington received \$814,633 in federal Title V funding in Fiscal Year 2006. 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. As of 2003, all state matching funds were cut; the state match is now completely provided through in-kind support from partners in the community-based literacy projects.

In 2006, the Washington Department of Health (DOH) used Title V funds to launch an abstinence-based statewide public awareness campaign targeting young people ages 10–14 and their parents. The campaign's goal is to reduce the number of unintended teen pregnancies through abstinence-based media messages that communicate the importance of healthy relationships, model

good decision-making skills, and encourage effective parent-teen communication. The campaign includes a website (www.nosexnoproblems.com), as well as billboards, radio and television ads, and pre-movie spots.

DOH also continued community-based media literacy projects throughout the state in Fiscal Year 2006. The goal of these projects is to reduce teen pregnancies by delaying initiation of early and unsafe sexual activity and by raising youth awareness around media representation of human sexuality. The project has 12 sites throughout the state, all of which use an abstinence-based media literacy curriculum called *Taking it Seriously: Abstinence and Media (TISAM)* to help youth deconstruct media messages related to sexual behavior. *TISAM* sites include Anacortes High School; College Place Middle School/Meadowdale High School; Connell High School; Endicott High School; Family Planning of Clallam County/Sequim School District; First AME Child and Family Center; Gonzaga University/Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media; Lake Stevens High School; Lummi CEDAR; Mount Rainier High School/Highline School District; Seattle School District; and Selah High School.

In 2005, a portion of Washington State's Title V funding was designated for an evaluation of its Title V programs. The evaluation started in 2005 and the results are expected in 2007.

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

There are three CBAE grantees in Washington State: AWARE, Inc.; Clarkston School District; and Teen-Aid. There are no AFLA grantees in Washington.

AWARE, Inc. has used at least a part of its CBAE grant to create a website, www.awareprogram.net, which contains misleading information about STDs and features an advice section that is fear-based and relies on shame. For example, the website states, "The people that go too fast physically usually break up within a few months."²¹ The website also advises young people to avoid masturbation: "consider that masturbation is often practiced in conjunction with viewing pornography. Both of these behaviors have the ability to become addictive. As with anything that can be addictive, it is best to steer clear and find other healthy activities to engage in."²²

One section of the AWARE Inc. website includes a chart that lists several different types of STDs. The chart focuses on the end stages of STDs and fails to mention that STDs can be curable or treatable and, with proper health care, most will never reach these end stages. In addition, the chart omits important information, such as where young people can get tested.²³ For example, under "Damage" it tells young men that Chlamydia results in sterility and young women that it is "considered to be the most common cause of sterility. Advanced stage may require removal of uterus, tubes, and ovaries."²⁴ It goes on to give national Chlamydia statistics, but fails to tell young people that they can get tested or that Chlamydia is curable with antibiotics.

The website also features "commercials" which tend to be fear-based and rely on shame. One commercial, titled "Fairytale," implies that teenage mothers will not be able to find their "Prince Charming."²⁵

Teen-Aid presents gender-biased stereotypes about sexuality. For example, one article on its website states, "Women have been socialized to maintain sexual purity, wait for 'love,' or at least not be 'easy,' while men commonly are under no such social mandate. This double standard may easily provoke women to fudge in reporting their number of sexual partners, especially in the beginning of a relationship."²⁶ Teen-Aid also states that "girls who had experienced sex had a significantly lowered self-esteem than virgin girls."²⁷

Teen-Aid has also produced several curricula, including *Sexuality, Commitment & Family* and *Me, My World, My Future*. SIECUS reviewed these curricula and found that they rely on fear and shame, include

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inaccurate and exaggerated information about condom failure, and contain biased messages about gender, sexual orientation, family structure, and pregnancy options. For example, in one lesson in *Sexuality, Commitment & Family*, students write an essay titled “If Wombs Had Windows,” in which they speculate how individuals and society might behave differently if “we could see the unborn child developing in the womb.” In the condom lesson from *Me, My World, My Future*, teachers compare using a condom to playing Russian roulette.²⁸

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2006

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov www.nosexnoproblems.com	\$814,663 federal	Title V
AWARE, Inc. 2005–2008 www.awareprogram.net	\$130,925	CBAE
Clarkson School District 2005–2008	\$753,614	CBAE
Teen-Aid, Inc. 2004–2007 www.teen-aid.org	\$800,000	CBAE

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Washington Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: (206) 624-2184
www.aclu-wa.org

League of Women Voters of Washington
4710 University Way NE, Suite 214
Seattle, WA 98105
Phone: (206) 622-8961
www.lwvwa.org

Lifelong AIDS Alliance
1002 East Seneca
Seattle, WA 98122
Phone: (206) 328-8979
www.lifelongaidsalliance.org

NARAL Pro-Choice Washington
811 1st Ave., Suite 456
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: (206) 624-1990
www.prochoicewashington.org

Planned Parenthood of Western Washington
2001 East Madison
Seattle, WA 98122
Phone: (206) 328-7734
[www.plannedparenthood.org/
westernwashington/](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/westernwashington/)

Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Choice of Washington
P.O. Box 30782
Seattle, WA 98113
Phone: (206) 260-7905

Washington Education Association
P.O. Box 9100
Federal Way, WA 98063
Phone: (253) 941-6700
www.washingtonea.org

Washington State Medical Association
2033 6th Ave., Suite 1100
Seattle, WA 98121
Phone: (206) 441-9762
www.wsma.org

Washington State Parent-Teacher
Association
2003 65th Ave., W
Tacoma, WA 98466
Phone: (253) 565-2153
www.wastatepta.org

Washington Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Human Life of Washington
14400 Bel-Red Rd., #207
Bellevue, WA 98007
Phone: (425) 641-9345
www.humanlife.net

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Newspapers in Washington

Bellingham Herald

Sam Taylor
Government Reporter
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Phone: (360) 715-2263

Edmonds Enterprise

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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 2006 begins on October 1, 2005 and ends on September 30, 2006.

- ² Hope Anderson, "Kelso Votes to Abandon Abstinence-Only Policy," *Daily News*, 15 March 2006, accessed 17 March 2006, <www.tdn.com/articles/2006/03/15/area_news/news03.txt>.
- ³ Hope Anderson, "Kelso Schools to Re-examine Sex Education Policies," *Daily News*, 8 January 2005.
- ⁴ Hope Anderson, "Kelso Mulls Teaching Beyond Abstinence," *Daily News*, 11 January 2005.
- ⁵ Margaret Ellis, "Gay Alliance Can't be Denied, B.G. Warned," *The Columbian*, 15 January 2006, accessed 17 January 2006, <<http://www.columbian.com/news/localNews/01152006news109068.cfm>>.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Margaret Ellis, "B.G. High Changes Focus of Club," *The Columbian*, 26 February 2006, accessed 27 February 2006, <<http://www.columbian.com/news/localNews/02262006news6791.cfm>>.
- ⁸ Global Strategy Group, *Poll on Attitudes toward Sexuality Education: Survey among Washington State Residents* (Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth and Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Washington, 2004).
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Planned Parenthood of Western Washington, "Poll Shows Washington Residents Endorse Comprehensive Sex Education for Youth," Press Release published 27 January 2004, accessed 14 January 2004, <http://www.ppww.org/Public_Affairs/Poll.html>.
- ¹² Jeffrey Barker, "Sex In Literature—Who's to Judge How Far to Go?," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 22 May 2004, accessed Lexis-Nexis, 4 June 2004.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ "A Fine Novel Gets Mistreated in FWay School Reading Flap," *News Tribune*, 12 May 2004, accessed Lexis-Nexis, 22 May 2004.
- ¹⁵ U.S. *Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: The Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/09/12/USTPstats.pdf>>.
- ¹⁶ *Washington State Pregnancy and Induced Abortion Statistics 2002* (Olympia WA: Washington State Department of Health, December 2003), 18, accessed 26 January 2007, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/chs/chs-data/Public/Abort_report_2002.pdf>.
- ¹⁷ *National Vital Statistics Reports 55.01* (Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2006), 10, accessed 26 January 2006, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr55/nvsr55_01.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 14.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹., "Frequently Asked Questions," AWARE, Inc., (2006), accessed 25 January 2007, <<http://www.awareprogram.net/index.php?aw1=faq>>.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ "STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)," AWARE, Inc., (2006), accessed 25 January 2007, <<http://www.awareprogram.net/index.php?aw1=stds>>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ "Multimedia," AWARE, Inc., (2006), accessed 25 January 2007, <<http://www.awareprogram.net/index.php?aw1=multimedia>>.
- ²⁶ "A Psychological Argument for Abstinence and Commitment," Teen-Aid, Inc., (2007), accessed 25 January 2007, <http://www.teen-aid.org/Abstinence_Education/Psychological_Argument_For_Abstinence_and_Commitment.htm>.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Steve Potter and Nancy Roach, *Sexuality, Commitment & Family* (Spokane, WA: Teen-Aid, 1990, HIV chapter revised 1998); Nancy Roach and LeAnna Benn, *Me, My World, My Future* (Spokane WA: Teen-Aid, 1993 HIV chapter revised 1998). For more information see, *Toward a Sexually Healthy America, Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs that Try to Keep Our Youth Scared Chaste* at <http://www.siecus.org/pubs/tsha_scaredchaste.pdf>.