



WASHINGTON

Washington received \$2,774,352 in federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2004.¹

Washington Sexuality Education Law

School districts in Washington are not required to implement comprehensive sexuality education,; however, they are required to teach HIV/AIDS-prevention education and emphasize abstinence as a prevention method. Contraceptives, including condoms, must not be presented as “certain means” of prevention. Information must be current and medically accurate.

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 take their children out of the class with written permission. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Revised Code of Washington Section 28A.230.070.

Recent Legislation

Medically Accurate Sex Education Bill Introduced

The “Healthy Youth Act,” House Bill 1282 and Senate Bill 5306, introduced in January 2005 and referred to their respective Committees on Health Care, would require all school districts offering sexual health education to incorporate the Department of Health and Office of the Superintendent of Public School’s guidelines for sexual health information into their instruction.

The legislation also states that this education must emphasize abstinence, but not to the exclusion of other methods of prevention and that it must include “medically accurate information about the effectiveness of contraceptives and other family planning options in a comprehensive manner.” The Department of Health is charged with adopting rules to determine what is medically accurate.

Furthermore, the legislation states that “instruction and materials shall be age-appropriate and appropriate for use with students of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds and students with disabilities.”

“Truth in Describing Sex Education Act” Introduced

In January 2005, the “Truth in Describing Sex Education Act” was introduced “to help parents clearly identify the type of education being taught, assist community committee members in selecting the best materials to comply with school district policy, and support teachers in complying with their school district policy.”

Senate Bill 5478 provides the federal government’s definition of “abstinence education” and would mandate that all school districts decide whether their sexuality education programs fit

within that definition and are thus “abstinence education” or whether they “describe sexual behaviors not included in the definition” and are thus “comprehensive sex education” programs.

Events of Note

Survey Shows Majority of Washington Residents Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education 2004

The results of an Advocates for Youth statewide survey conducted through the Global Strategy Group show that respondents overwhelmingly support comprehensive sexuality education. When asked whether they supported sex 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.²

Respondents also made it clear that they opposed federally funded abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that prohibit youth access to “information about birth control and condoms for the prevention of pregnancy, STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), and HIV/AIDS.”³ 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.”⁴

“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 policy makers—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.”⁵

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

A 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. The passage in question deals with a character’s first sexual experience.

The mother felt this 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 districts’ list of approved materials and had been taught the previous semester with no complaints. The teacher defended the book’s value saying “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 districts’ top professionals has been trumped by a narrow viewpoint.”⁶ Regarding the drawings, he 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’.”⁷

The district review committee rejected the parents’ challenge citing the novel’s “artistic merit” and “sensitive treatment of sexual content.”⁸ 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.

During the summer of 2004, parents were sent the assigned reading lists for their child's grade as well as disclaimers about the books' content in September. The book in question was moved from the ninth grade to the eleventh grade reading list.

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

*Advocates Work on Policy
2003*

In 2003, a coalition of choice groups, HIV/AIDS prevention groups, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) organizations, and parent advocacy organizations helped to introduce legislation that would require all sexuality education and abstinence-only-until-marriage programs to be medically accurate.

During a hearing in the Washington House Healthcare Committee on January 29, 2003, students who had participated in *SHARE (Sexuality, Health, and Relationship Education)*, an abstinence-only-until-marriage program, testified that the program had presented inaccurate and misleading information regarding condoms, abortion, and sexually transmitted diseases. This legislation and testimony generated a good deal of press, which has raised the level of public discussion around the need for medically accurate comprehensive sexuality education in Washington State. Ultimately, the legislation did not pass.

*Governor Asked to Reject Title V Funds
January 2003*

In 2003, the Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (GACHA) asked Governor Gary Locke (D) to reject the federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in part because of concerns that the Bush Administration and a Republican-controlled U.S. Congress would put stricter requirements on the program.

In the letter to Governor Locke, GACHA Chair Judith Billings stated that abstinence-only-until-marriage programs "do not give students complete information that they need to help them make responsible choices about their sexual activity. To deny them a balanced program that offers life-saving knowledge is irresponsible." The letter also pointed out that the federal government's eight-point definition is about "ideology, not scientifically stated factors."

"Council members are strongly in favor of comprehensive health education which includes abstinence as a choice, but just as strongly unanimously oppose attempted indoctrination to a particular political/moral dogma that attempts to pass as good public education," the letter said. GACHA also emphasized that the program's insistence on sexual intercourse only within the confines of marriage is harmful to gay and lesbian youth and those living in nontraditional households and that it offers "only shame and fear" to sexually abused youth.

Governor Locke responded through the Secretary of the Department of Health, Mary C. Selecky. In her letter to GACHA, Selecky noted that in order to reject the funding statutory changes would have to be made to current Washington law. She also stated that programs funded with Title V money are "only one component of a comprehensive sexuality education program for communities, clients, and partners of clients." She further stated that all Title V funded programs must be "consistent with public health and scientific and medical accuracy."⁹

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.¹⁰
- In 2002, women ages 15-19 accounted for 19% of the 25,446 total abortions performed in Washington.¹¹
- In 2002, Washington's birth rate was 33 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 compared to a teen birth rate of 43 per 1,000 nationwide.¹²
- In 2003, Washington's Chlamydia infection rate was 2,273 per 100,000 women ages 15-19 and 392 per 100,000 men ages 15-19.¹³
- In 2003, Washington's gonorrhea infection rate was 168 per 100,000 women ages 15-19¹⁴ and 109 per 100,000 men ages 15-19.¹⁵

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Washington received \$832,000 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. As of 2003, all state matching funds were cut; the state match is now completely provided through in-kind support.

In 2004, the Washington Department of Health (DOH) used Title V funds to plan an abstinence-based statewide public awareness campaign targeting youth ages 10-14 and parents of young teens. 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 public awareness campaign will be launched in Spring 2005.

DOH also plans to implement and evaluate community-based media literacy projects throughout the state in FY 2005. The goal 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 sites will use an abstinence-based media literacy curriculum that aims to help youth to deconstruct media messages related to sexual behavior.

Title V Evaluation

Washington evaluated its Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in 2003, reviewing both its Abstinence Education Program (AEP) and *Teen Aware* abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. The evaluations consisted of pre- and post-tests surveys and comparison groups. Intent to abstain was significantly greater among students enrolled in the AEP program than those in the comparison group; however, when analyzed site-by-site, none of the projects was able to show statistical significance.¹⁶ Students who participated in *Teen Aware* showed a more favorable response to abstinence than those in the comparison group, although about a third of them reported that they did not like the program.¹⁷ These evaluations have been reviewed by Advocates for Youth (AFY) in its 2004 report *Five Years of*

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact. AFY found mixed results about whether the programs were able to change students’ intent to abstain.¹⁸

Special Projects of Regional and National Significance–Community Based Abstinence Education (SPRANS–CBAE)¹⁹ and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are currently two SPRANS–CBAE grantees in Washington State: the Pregnancy Resource Center and Teen-Aid (receives two grants). There are no AFLA grantees in Washington.

Teen-Aid’s SPRANS–CBAE grant is entitled *I’ve Got Connections*. This grant began in 2001 and will end in 2004. According to Teen-Aid’s website, “the heart of this grant is to develop a saturation model that will enable small organizations to reach communities with the abstinence until marriage message using a variety of vehicles.”

I’ve Got Connections uses outreach, media, and written materials, including billboards, radio commercials, and speakers. The billboards advertise a phone line that provides information on events to keep children active, information on “sexuality issues of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, and relationships,” and connections with “pregnancy counseling and services.”²⁰

The project’s brochures and posters discuss topics such as “refusal skills, compatibility comparisons for dating, assessment of dating relationships, boundary setting, understanding the benefits of marriage and returning to abstinence.” *I’ve Got Connections* also offers curricula for elementary, middle, and high school students. Speakers for the project are recruited and trained through the SHARE program and supplement the regular curriculum or presenter in a community setting.

Teen-Aid produces several curricula, including *Sexuality, Commitment & Family*. SIECUS reviewed this curriculum and found that it relies on fear and shame, includes inaccurate and exaggerated information about condom failure, and contains biased messages about gender, sexual orientation, family structure, and pregnancy options.

For example, in one lesson students write an essay entitled “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.”²¹ In the condom lesson from another Teen-Aid curriculum, entitled *Me, My World, My Future*, teachers compare using a condom to playing Russian Roulette.

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantees Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS–CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov	\$832,000 federal	Title V

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Program Grantees Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes SPRANS-CBAE, Title V, and AFLA)
Teen-Aid 2001-2004	\$751,352	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
DUAL GRANTEE 2004-2007 www.teen-aid.org	\$800,000	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)
Pregnancy Resource Center 2002-2005	\$391,000	SPRANS-CBAE (Implementation Grant)

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Phone: (360) 236-3515

Washington Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Washington
705 Second Ave., Suite 300
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) 622-8960
www.lwvwa.org

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

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

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Planned Parenthood Affiliates of
Washington
PO Box 7648
Olympia, WA 98507
Phone: (360) 705-1965

Religious Coalition for
Reproductive Choice of Washington
PO Box 45337
Seattle, WA 98105
Phone: (206) 632-2445

Washington Education Association
(WEA)
32032 Weyerhaeuser Way S.
Federal Way, WA 98001
Phone: (253) 941-6700
www.washingtonea.org

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

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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

Newspapers in Washington

Bellingham Weekly
Tim Johnson
Executive Editor
1329 N. State St.
Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: (360) 676-1966

King Co. Journal Newspapers
Robert Whale
Editor
600 Washington Ave. S
Kent, WA 98032
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Korea Times Seattle Edition
Hyunsuk Kim
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12532 Aurora Ave. N
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522 W. Riverside Ave.
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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 2004 begins on October 1, 2003 and ends on September 30, 2004.

² 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).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Planned Parenthood of Western Washington, "Poll Shows Washington Residents Endorse Comprehensive Sex Education for Youth," Press Release published on 27 January 2004, accessed 14 January 2004, <http://www.ppww.org/Public_Affairs/Poll.html>.

⁶ Jeffrey Barker, "Sex In Literature – Who's to Judge How Far to Go?" *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 22 May 2004.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "A Fine Novel Gets Mistreated in FWay School Reading Flap," *The News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA), 12 May 2004.

⁹ "Washington State HIV/AIDS Council Asks Governor to Reject Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Title V Funding," *SIECUS Policy Update*, January 2003, accessed 16 February 2004, <<http://www.siecus.org/policy/PUupdates/pdate0045.html>>.

¹⁰ *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>.

¹¹ *Washington State Pregnancy and Induced Abortion Statistics 2002* (Olympia WA: Washington State Department of Health, December 2003), 18, accessed 7 February 2005, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphi/chs/chs-data/Public/Abort_report_2002.pdf>.

¹² *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>>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁵ Ibid..

¹⁶ D. McBride, P. Noyes, M. Wear, C. Malloy, *Abstinence Education program Evaluation: Final Report, October 2003*. Prepared for the Offices of Maternal and Child Health Washington State Department of Health.

¹⁷ McBride D, Noyes P, Wear M, Villanueva T et al. *Washington State's Teen Aware Program Evaluation: Final Report, December 2003*. Prepared for the Office of Maternal and Child Health Washington State Department of Health, 2003.

¹⁸ Debra Hauser, *Five Years of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education: Assessing the Impact* (Washington, D.C: Advocates for Youth, 2004), 18.

¹⁹ 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).

²⁰ *I've Got Connections*, Teen-Aid, Inc. (11 August 2004), accessed 17 February 2005, <http://www.teen-aid.org/Ive_Got_Connections.htm>.

²¹ *I've Got Connections*, Teen-Aid, Inc., accessed 22 February 2005, <<http://www.teen-aid.org>>.