



SIECUS

State Profile

WASHINGTON, DC

The Department of Health and community-based organizations in Washington, DC received \$1,140,331 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Washington, DC Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Washington, DC regulations state that District public schools must provide comprehensive school health education, including instruction on human sexuality and reproduction. The instruction must be age-appropriate and taught in grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

This instruction must include information on the human body, intercourse, contraception, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, sexual orientation, decision-making skills regarding parenting and sexuality, and awareness and prevention of rape and sexual assault.

The Superintendent of District of Columbia Public Schools is charged with ensuring that sexuality education is taught in schools and that students have a minimum proficiency in this area. Accordingly, the superintendent must provide systematic teacher training and staff development activities for health and physical education instructors. A list of all instructional materials for student and teacher training must be included in the list of textbooks submitted annually to the District Board of Education. The Board of Education must approve these materials.

Parents or guardians may submit a written note to the principal to remove their children from sexuality education and/or STD/HIV education classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See District of Columbia Municipal Regulations Sections 2304 and 2305.

Recent Legislation

Legislation to Extend Anti-Discrimination Laws

DC Bill 330, introduced in July 2007, would amend the district’s nondiscrimination statutes to include gender identity or expression as a protected category from unlawful discrimination. The bill was sent to the Council Committee on Workforce Development and Government Operations on July 10, 2007.

Bill Creates HPV Education Campaign

DC Bill 330, introduced in January 2007, establishes a public education campaign meant to raise awareness about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), HPV’s relationship with cervical cancer, and the availability of an HPV vaccine. It also establishes a vaccination program for female students entering grade six, and requires the Department of Health to track implementation.² The bill passed and was assigned Law Number 10 on July 12, 2007.

Events of Note

Beleaguered DC School System Passes Health Standards

January 2008; Washington, DC

Shortly after receiving a “D” for its response to the AIDS crisis on a report card put together by an independent advocacy group, the D.C. State Board of Education unanimously passed new health and physical education standards that lay the groundwork for comprehensive sexuality education.

The D.C. State Board of Education announced in August 2007 that it would begin seeking public input on the new standards, which are intended to re-focus the school system’s efforts on preventing HIV/AIDS, other STDs, and teen pregnancy among students. The standards cover students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade and were developed with help from national health standards groups.³

The guidelines cover sexual orientation and gender identity in middle school, calling for sixth graders to be taught, “People, regardless of biological sex, gender, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and culture, have sexual feelings and the need for love, affection and physical intimacy.” Eighth graders would hear the definition of sexual orientation and learn that some people are sexually or romantically attracted to people of the same gender.⁴

At a State Board of Education hearing in November 2007, community members turned out to share their opinions on the standards. Representatives of organizations like MetroTeenAIDS, which works with young people at risk for or infected with HIV, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and Children’s National Medical Center all testified in favor of the standards. Young people also advocated for the additional information included in the new standards.

There was some criticism, however. One local pastor expressed concern over the information on methods of contraception, saying that focusing on contraception was similar to giving approval to sexual activity. A second pastor opposed the discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity. “It doesn’t take an advanced degree in anatomy or physiology to know that the human body is not designed for this deviation from the natural order of things,” he said.⁵

Despite some disagreements, in January 2008, the board voted to approve the standards. Schools in the District of Columbia will begin using pre-packaged programs that achieve the goals set by the standards in fall 2008. School administrators are also in the process of the creating the city’s own program that should be ready in late 2009.

Washington, DC’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note⁶

- In 2007, 51% of female high school students and 64% of male high school students in District of Columbia reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 5% of female high school students and 22% of male high school students in District of Columbia 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, 14% of female high school students and 29% of male high school students in District of Columbia 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, 39% of female high school students and 42% of male high school students in District of Columbia 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, 68% of females and 72% of males in District of Columbia 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, 14% of females and 4% of males in District of Columbia 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, 15% of females and 21% of males in District of Columbia reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 18% of females and 28% of males nationwide.
- In 2007, 86% of high school students in District of Columbia reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

The Washington, DC Department of Health received \$142,008 in federal Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding in Fiscal Year 2007. 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. In Washington, DC the match is matched by in-kind funds from the District.

The Washington, DC Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Division uses these funds to administer the “I’m Worth the Wait” campaign, which consists of a peer education program, a media campaign, school-based abstinence-only-until-marriage programs, group mentoring, and a theater troupe.

The *I’m Worth the Wait* program targets young people ages 8–12 and “emphasizes that premarital sexual activity puts youth at risk for unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (such as HIV/AIDS), and other negative life outcomes. The curriculum is realistic and culturally sensitive for African-American and English-speaking Hispanic youth living in the District of Columbia.”⁷

The DC Department of Health planned an evaluation of the “*I’m Worth the Wait*” campaign; however, it was not completed.

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

There are two CBAE grantees in Washington, DC: Best Friends Foundation and Youth Organizations United to Rise Community Center. There is one AFLA grantee in Washington, DC: National Organization of Concerned Black Men.

The Best Friends Foundation runs two abstinence-only-until-marriage programs: *Best Friends* for young women and *Best Men* for young men.⁸ Best Friends is an abstinence-only-until-marriage program that goes from sixth through twelfth grade. In ninth grade, girls enter the “Diamond Girls Leadership program.” All Diamond Girls are required to participate in either the Diamond Girls Jazz Choir or the Performance Dance Troupe.⁹

The Best Men program claims to have 1,000 participants, and besides abstinence-only-until-marriage programming, includes fitness and extracurricular activities.¹⁰

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

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Washington, DC, Department of Health www.dchealth.dc.gov/doh	\$142,008 federal	Title V
Best Friends Foundation 2004–2007 www.bestfriendsfoundation.org	\$754,785	CBAE
National Organization of Concerned Black Men 2004–2009 www.cbmnational.org	\$243,538	AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact¹¹

Letitia Black
Government of the District of Columbia, DC Department of Health
301 Douglas St., NE
Shaed Elementary School
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 541-6306

Washington, D.C. Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
1112 Eleventh St. NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 789-4666
www.teenpregnancydc.org

Metro Teen AIDS
651 Pennsylvania Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 543-9355
www.metroteenaid.org

Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan
Washington, DC
1108 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 347-8500
www.ppmw.org

Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League
410 7th St. SE
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 546-5940
www.smyal.org

WASHINGTON, DC

City Year
918 U. St.
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 776-7780
www.cityyear.org

Young Women's Project
1328 Florida Ave. NW, Suite 2000
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 332-3399
www.youngwomensproject.org

Washington, D.C. Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Best Friends Foundation
5335 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Suite 440
Washington, DC 20015
Phone: (202) 478-9677
www.bestfriendsfoundation.org

Newspapers in Washington, DC¹²

Washington City Paper
Newsroom
2390 Champlain St., NW
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 332-2100
www.washingtoncitypaper.com

Washington Post
Newsroom
1150 15th St., NW
Washington, DC 20071
Phone: (703)469-2500
www.washingtonpost.com

Washington Times
Newsroom
3600 New York Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 636-3000
www.washtimes.com

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

² "HPV Vaccination and Reporting Act of 2007," accessed 6 May 2008, <www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/images/00001/20070126124422.pdf>.

³ Gary Emerling, "D.C. Schools To Hold Hearings On Sex-Ed," *Washington Times*, 10 August 2007, accessed 13 August 2007, <<http://washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070810/METRO/108100057/1001>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gary Emerling, "Public Ponders Sex-Ed Classes," *Washington Times*, 29 November 2007, accessed 30 November 2007, <<http://washingtontimes.com/article/20071129/METRO/111290084/1004>>.

⁶ 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>>.

⁷ Personal conversation between Letitia Black and Catherine Morrison, 25 March 2008.

⁸ "Home," Best Friends, (2005), accessed 18 March 2008, <<http://www.bestfriendsfoundation.org>>.

⁹ "What is Best Friends?" Best Friends, (2005), accessed 18 March 2008, <<http://www.bestfriendsfoundation.org/BFWhatIsBF.html>>.

¹⁰ "What is Best Men?" Best Friends, (2005), accessed 18 March 2008, <<http://www.bestfriendsfoundation.org/BMWhatIsBM2.html>>.

¹¹ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

¹² 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](#).