



SIECUS

State Profile

PENNSYLVANIA

Community-based organizations in Pennsylvania received \$6,237,533 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2007.¹

Pennsylvania Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Schools in Pennsylvania are not required to teach sexuality education. Primary, intermediate, middle, and high schools are, however, required to teach sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education. Schools must use materials that have been determined by the local school district, are age-appropriate, discuss prevention, and stress abstinence as “the only completely reliable means of preventing sexual transmission.”

The state has created the *Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education*, which includes STD- and HIV-prevention education. All decisions regarding HIV-prevention curricula and materials must be made by local school districts. School districts do not have to follow a specific curriculum, but they must use these standards as a framework for the development of their curricula.

School districts must publicize the fact that parents and guardians can review all curriculum materials. Parents and guardians whose principles or religious beliefs conflict with instruction may excuse their children from the programs. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Pennsylvania Code Title 22, Chapter 4, Section 29, and the *Academic Standards for Health, Safety, and Physical Education*.

Recent Legislation

Bill Calls for Sexual Violence Awareness Programs

House Bill 1129, also called the *College and University Sexual Violence Education Act*, was introduced in April 2007. It would require institutions of higher education and privately licensed schools to set up sexual violence awareness education programs. These programs must include a discussion of sexual violence, the possibility of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and information on where and how to get assistance and medical treatment if sexually assaulted. The bill was sent to the House Committee on Education on November 19, 2007.

Legislation to Amend Human Relations Act

House Bill 1400, introduced in June 2007, would amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to include freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill defines sexual orientation as “an actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality” and defines gender identity or expression as “an actual or perceived gender identity, appearance, behavior, expression or physical characteristic whether or not associated with an individual’s sex as assigned at birth.” The bill was sent to the House Committee on State Government on June 18, 2007.

Bill Aims to Create HPV Awareness

House Bill 845, introduced in March 2007, would require the Department of Health to promote public awareness about the relationship between the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer. The Department would establish a program that incorporates written materials and brochures to enable individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Furthermore, HB 845 requires health insurance policies to provide coverage for the HPV vaccine for young women between the ages of 11 and 26. The bill was sent to the House Committee on Health and Human Services on March 19, 2007.

Events of Note*Parents Urge School Board to Adopt Comprehensive Curriculum*

March 2008; Pittsburgh, PA

Parents in Pittsburgh are stepping up their campaign for comprehensive sexuality education with an online petition signed by over 200 parents. The group started its advocacy efforts in April 2007 when 15 parents, students, and health researchers spoke at a school board meeting and urged the board to modify the district's abstinence-only curriculum to include discussions about contraception.

According to the city's curriculum supervisor for health and physical education, Pittsburgh's current abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum addresses AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, but does not include the discussion of contraception.² The supervisor has argued that this abstinence-only approach reflects Pittsburgh's "conservative mentality."³ She noted that teachers are directed to answer questions about contraception if students ask them, but admitted, "There is room for improvement" in the curriculum.⁴

The board, however, took no action for almost a year. In response, two of the parents created an online petition demanding comprehensive sex education. The petition reads, in part, "In Pittsburgh Public Schools, teens aren't receiving the information they need to make healthy and responsible life decisions." It criticizes the curriculum for trying to scare students from sex, and for promoting a married, heterosexual lifestyle as the standard of behavior.⁵

One school board member, who has been in office for over thirty years, acknowledged that the district has had nothing other than abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. She thinks teaching abstinence is necessary, though agrees that it should be accompanied by enhanced education about STDs.⁶

The district plans to review the health and physical education curriculum—which includes the sex education curriculum—but did not promise to discard the current abstinence-only-until-marriage program.⁷

School Board Member Makes Anti-Gay Comments in Response to GSA

November 2006; Ambridge, PA

During a school board discussion on the formation of a Gay-Straight Alliance at the high school, the Vice President of the Ambridge Area School Board, referred to the alliance as a "sex club." When other board members suggested that he misunderstood the mission of the club, he replied, "Ok, the faggots."⁸

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) of Pittsburgh asked for the board member to formally apologize and to attend an anti-discrimination workshop, or to resign.⁹

When asked later, the vice president said he did not remember using the term, but that it was a part of his vocabulary because he was a member of an older generation that found different terms acceptable in referring to gays and other groups.¹⁰ As of July 2008, he remains listed as a school board member, though he is no longer the vice president.¹¹

Despite the offending language, the GSA was approved.¹²

School District's Designation of October as "Gay and Lesbian History Month" Sparked Debates October 2006; Philadelphia, PA

As the result of a contentious debate, the Philadelphia School district no longer designates months for special observations such as Gay and Lesbian History Month, Black History Month, or Hispanic History Month.

The controversy began in 2006, when in an effort to be more inclusive, the district designated October as Gay and Lesbian History Month.¹³ Many parents expressed concern that the curriculum would change to accommodate Gay and Lesbian History Month. Some parents suggested that this event was an endorsement of homosexuality, which was confusing to children and inappropriate for schools. One critic claimed homosexuality is a psychosis and called for a boycott of the schools. "Next, there may be fornication pride month, adulterer pride month, pedophile pride month, etc.," he asserted at an October 2006 school board meeting.¹⁴

The school board assured parents that there would not be any district-wide curricula implemented or celebrations held to honor the month. The district's spokesperson explained, however, that individual schools with Gay-Straight Alliances may have observances.¹⁵

Other parents and community members in Philadelphia were disturbed by the racial implications of the school board's decision to equate Gay and Lesbian History Month with months designed to honor the history of racial/ethnic groups. "The problem for us then is not the month itself, but the claim it makes openly," explained an official at the African-American Freedom & Reconstruction League. "The first claim is that Gay and Lesbian History Month is the same as Black History Month, and the second claim is the Gay struggle underline (sic) the African-American struggles for basic rights. When in reality the Gay and Lesbian History Month is introducing a lifestyle that is totally unacceptable to most people of African descent," he continued.¹⁶

In August 2007, the district decided to remove all monthly designations from its 2007–08 school calendar. This move was also met with criticism, but this time from advocates for LGBT rights. "In a world where presidential candidates make appearances on lesbian and gay cable networks, you're telling me it's too controversial for the School District of Philadelphia? Come on," said Kevin Jennings, executive director of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.¹⁷ The Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP also disapproved of the decision, saying, "The caveman mentality won the day, and that was sad."¹⁸

The district said that the decision would have no effect on the curriculum.¹⁹

Pennsylvania's Youth: Statistical Information of Note²⁰

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- In 2007, 55% of female high school students and 70% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 45% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2007, 6% of female high school students and 24% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 10% of male high school students nationwide.

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- In 2007, 14% of female high school students and 37% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 41% of female high school students and 50% of male high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 57% of females and 73% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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 10% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 12% of females and 18% of males in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 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, 84% of high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 90% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

In Fiscal Year 2007, the Pennsylvania Department of Health was eligible for \$1,693,422 in Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding. 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. However, Pennsylvania did not apply for these funds. Therefore, Pennsylvania did not provide matching funds nor did it have organizations supported by this type of federal money in Fiscal Year 2007.

In addition, new information indicates that no Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funds were expended in the state in Fiscal Year 2006.²¹ The Department of Health applied for and was awarded 2006 funds; however, the process occurred one year late. States have two consecutive years to expend any funds provided in a given Fiscal Year. Because Fiscal Year 2006 funds were awarded a year late, they had to be expended by June 30, 2007, the end of Pennsylvania's Fiscal Year. The state was unable to distribute the funds prior to deadline and, therefore, the entire \$1,693,422 Fiscal Year 2006 award was returned to the federal government unspent.

The last year the state of Pennsylvania expended any Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funds was Fiscal Year 2002.

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

There are nine CBAE grantees in Pennsylvania: HOPE Worldwide, La Salle University, Nueva Esperanza, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations, People for People, Rape and Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County, To Our Children's Future with Health, Inc., and Women's Care Center of Erie County, Inc. There are three AFLA grantees in Pennsylvania: The Wellness Center/Crozer-Chester Medical Center (receives two grants), Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh, and To Our Children's Future with Health, Inc.

The Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations (PALO) conducts the Latino Youth Sexual Abstinence Project "It's a Better Life."²² "It's a Better Life" is aimed at Latino youth in middle school and high school and uses an abstinence curriculum developed by PALO for participating membership organizations.²³

Women's Care Center of Erie County, Inc., a crisis pregnancy center (CPC), receives both CBAE and earmark funding. . Crisis pregnancy centers typically advertise as providing medical services and then use anti-abortion propaganda, misinformation, and fear and shame tactics to dissuade women facing unintended pregnancy from exercising their right to choose. Women's Care Center of Erie County, Inc. runs the "Abstinence Advantage Program (AAP)." AAP provides abstinence-only-until-marriage programs to "thousands of students in the Erie County region both public and private."²⁴

AAP uses several different curricula; *Character in Action* is used for students in kindergarten through fourth grade, the *Choosing the Best* series is used for students in middle school, and *WAIT (Why Am I Tempted) Training* is used for students in ninth grade.

SIECUS reviewed two of the curricula produced by Choosing the Best, Inc.—*Choosing the Best LIFE* (for high school students) and *Choosing the Best Path* (for middle school students). These reviews found that the curricula name numerous negative consequences of premarital sexuality activity and suggest that teens should feel guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed of sexual behavior. For example, *Choosing the Best LIFE* states that, "Relationships often lower the self-respect of both partners—one feeling used, the other feeling like the user. Emotional pain can cause a downward spiral leading to intense feelings of lack of worthlessness." *Choosing the Best PATH* says, "Sexual activity also can lead to the trashing of a person's reputation, resulting in the loss of friends."²⁵

In addition, SIECUS reviewed *WAIT Training* and found that it contained little medical or biological information and almost no information about STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Instead, it contains information and statistics about marriage, many of which are outdated and not supported by scientific research. It also contains messages of fear and shame and biased views of gender, sexual orientation, and family type. For example, *WAIT Training* explains, "men sexually are like microwaves and women sexually are like crockpots...A woman is stimulated more by touch and romantic words. She is far more attracted by a man's personality while a man is stimulated by sight. A man is usually less discriminating about those to whom he is physically attracted."²⁶

To Our Children's Future with Health, Inc. (TOCFWH), which receives CBAE, AFLA, and earmark funding, uses the curriculum *Discovering Dignity: An Education Training Program for Youth?*²⁷ TOCFWH trains adults as "Certified Abstinence Education Facilitators" who then provide abstinence-only-until-marriage programming to fifth through twelfth grade students in schools, community-based programs, and faith-based settings.²⁸

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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)
HOPE Worldwide 2004–2007 www.hopeww.org	\$798,418	CBAE
La Salle University 2007–2011	\$510,089	CBAE
Nueva Esperanza 2007–2011 www.esperanza.us	\$600,000	CBAE
Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America 2004–2007 www.oicofamerica.org	\$799,500	CBAE
Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations 2004–2007 www.paloweb.org	\$799,569	CBAE
People for People 2007–2011 www.peopleforpeople.org	\$600,000	CBAE
Rape and Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County 2006–2011	\$567,138	CBAE

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
To Our Children's Future with Health, Inc. 2005–2008	\$485,524	CBAE
DUAL GRANTEE 2002–2007	\$485,524	AFLA
Women's Care Center of Erie County, Inc. 2007–2011	\$463,764	CBAE
The Wellness Center/Crozer-Chester Medical Center 2002–2007	\$234,337	AFLA
DUAL GRANTEE 2002–2007	\$154,194	AFLA
Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh 2002–2007 www.mercylink.org	\$225,000	AFLA

Adolescent Health Contact²⁹

Kelly Holland
 Pennsylvania Department of Health
 Bureau of Family Health
 7th Floor, East Wing
 Health & Welfare Building
 Harrisburg, PA 17108
 Phone: (717) 772-2762

P E N N S Y L V A N I A

Pennsylvania Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 40008
Philadelphia, PA 19006
Phone: (215) 592-1513
www.aclupa.org

Attic Youth Center
255 South 16th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: (215) 545-433
www.atticyouthcenter.org

Family Health Council of Central
Pennsylvania
3461 Market St., Suite 200
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Phone: (717) 761-7380
www.fhccp.org

NARAL Pro-Choice Pennsylvania
P.O. Box 58174
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: (215) 546-4666
www.prochoicepennsylvania.org

Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen
Pregnancy
3461 Market St., Suite 200
Camp Hill, PA 1710
Phone: (717) 761-7380
www.pcptp.org

Statewide Pennsylvania Rights Coalition
30 Forgedale Rd.
Fleetwood, PA 19522
Phone: (717) 920-9537

Adagio Health
960 Penn Ave., Suite 600
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: (412) 288-2130
www.adagiohealth.org

Christian Association of U. Penn.
118 South 37th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215) 746-6350
www.upennca.org

The Family Planning Council
260 South Broad St., Suite 1000
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: (215) 985-2600
www.familyplanning.org

National Council of Jewish Women
1620 Murray Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
Phone: (412) 421-6118
www.ncjwpgh.org/main

Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates
300 North 2nd St., Suite 400
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone: (717) 234-3024
www.plannedparenthoodpa.org

Pennsylvania Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Pennsylvania Family Institute
23 North Front St.
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone: (717) 545-0600
www.pafamily.org

Pennsylvanians for Human Life
590 Snyder Ave.
West Chester, PA 19382
Phone: (610) 696-0780
www.pennlife.org

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Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation
4800 Jonestown Rd., Suite 102
Harrisburg, PA 17109
Phone: (717) 541-0034
www.paprolife.org

People for Life
1625 West 26th St.
P.O. Box 1126
Erie, PA 16512
Phone: (814) 459-1333
www.peopleforlife.org

Newspapers in Pennsylvania³⁰

Bucks County Courier Times
Newsroom
8400 Route 13
Levittown, PA 19057
Phone: (215) 949-4000
www.phillyburbs.com

The Morning Call
Newsroom
101 North 6th St
Allentown, PA 18101
Phone: (610) 820-6500
www.mcall.com

Philadelphia Daily News
Newsroom
400 North Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19130
Phone: (215) 854-5900
www.philly.com/dailynews

Philadelphia Metro
Newsroom
30 S. 15th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Phone: (215) 717-2600
www.philly.metro.us

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Newsroom
34 Blvd. of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: (412) 263-1100
www.post-gazette.com

Erie Times-News
Newsroom
205 West 12th Street
Erie, PA 16534
Phone: (814) 870-1600
www.goerie.com

The Patriot-News
Newsroom
812 Market St.
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone: (717) 255-8100
www.patriot-news.com

Philadelphia Inquirer
Newsroom
400 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
Phone: (215) 854-5900
www.philly.com/inquirer

Philadelphia Tribune
Newsroom
520 S. 16th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19146
Phone: (215) 893-4050
www.phila-tribune.com

Reading Eagle
Newsroom
345 Penn St.
Reading, PA 19603
Phone: (610) 371-5000
www.readingeagle.com

Tribune-Review

Newsroom

503 Martindale St., 3rd floor,

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Phone: (412) 321-6460

www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/

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 Joe Smydo, "Some Want Contraception Taught In City's Schools," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 17 April 2007, accessed 18 April 2007, <www.post-gazette.com/pg/07107/778610-298.stm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Pittsburgh Parents Petition for Sex Ed," *Associated Content.com*, 20 March 2008, accessed 16 April 2008, <www.associatedcontent.com/article/662949/pittsburgh_parents_petition_for_sex.html>.

⁶ "Some Pittsburgh Parents Petitioning For Broader Sexual Education," *ThePittsburghChannel.com*, 17 March 2008, accessed 21 March 2008, <www.thepittsburghchannel.com/family/15618754/detail.html>.

⁷ Joe Smydo, "Sex-Ed Topics Too Narrow, Group Says," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 17 March 2008, accessed 18 March 2008, <www.post-gazette.com/pg/08077/865776-298.stm>.

⁸ "Local School Board Member Accused of Using Gay Slur," *The Pittsburgh Channel*, 17 November 2006, accessed 20 November 2006, <www.thepittsburghchannel.com/news/10347565/detail.html>; Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, "GLSEN Outraged by Pennsylvania School Board Member's Alleged Gay Slur," 16 November 2006, accessed 6 December 2006, <www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2012.html>.

⁹ Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

¹⁰ "Ambridge School Official In Hot Water Over Controversial Comment," *WPXI.com*, 16 November 2006, accessed 19 November 2006, <www.wpxi.com/news/10334510/detail.html>.

¹¹ *Ambridge Area School District – Board of Directors*, Ambridge Area School District (2008), accessed 5 June 2008, <www.ambridge.k12.pa.us/board.htm>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jim McCaffrey, "SRC Bitterly Clashes Over Gay History Month," *Evening Bulletin*, 13 October 2006, accessed 17 October 2006, <www.theeveningbulletin.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17323979&BRD=2737&PAG=461&dept_id=576361&rfi=6>.

¹⁴ McCaffrey.

¹⁵ Susan Snyder, "Gay History Month Sparks District Wide Debate," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 September 2006, accessed 1 October 2006, <www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/counties/philadelphia_county/philadelphia/15624842.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Phila. School District Removes History Months From Calendar," *Phillyburbs.com*, 11 August 2007, accessed 13 August 2007, <www.phillyburbs.com/pb-dyn/news/103-08112007-1391362.html>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 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>>. Note: the state of Pennsylvania did not participate in the 2007 YRBSS.

²¹ Personal conversation between Wanda Godar and Catherine Morrison 11 February 2008.

²² "Programs," PALO (Pennsylvania Association of Latino Organizations), (2007), accessed 4 March 2008, <<http://www.paloweb.org/programs.html>>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Prevention Education: Abstinence Advantage Program," Women's Care Center of Erie, Inc., accessed 4 March 2008, <http://www.wccerie.org/abstinence_advantage_program.htm>.

²⁵ Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best LIFE* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000); Bruce Cook, *Choosing the Best PATH* (Marietta, GA: Choosing the Best Inc., 2000). For more information, see SIECUS' reviews of *Choosing the Best LIFE* and *Choosing the Best PATH* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

²⁶ Joneen Krauth-Mackenzie, *WAIT (Why Am I Tempted) Training, Second Edition* (Greenwood Village, CO: WAIT Training, undated). For more information, see SIECUS' review of *WAIT Training* at <http://www.communityactionkit.org/curricula_reviews.html>.

²⁷ "Programs and Services: Abstinence Division," To Our Children's Future with Health, Inc., (2008), accessed 4 March 2008, <<http://www.tocfwh.org/AbstinenceDivision.asp>>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ SIECUS has identified this person as a state-based contact for information on adolescent health and if applicable, abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

³⁰ 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](#).