

SIECUS



WINTER/SPRING 2014

DEVELOPMENTS

SIECUS Developments is the semiannual newsletter of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, a national nonprofit organization. Since 1964, SIECUS has been at the forefront of promoting comprehensive sexuality education for people of all ages and protecting the rights of individuals to make informed sexual and reproductive choices.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

MARCH IS
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

APRIL IS
MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

APRIL IS
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION AWARENESS MONTH

MAY IS
TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION MONTH

JUNE IS
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PRIDE MONTH



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Monica Rodriguez

It is an extraordinary time as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Sexuality Information and Education Council


of the United States. This year started off strong on many fronts, which you'll read more about in this issue of *SIECUS Developments*. However, I would really like to highlight the enormous impact that SIECUS has made for sexuality and sexual health issues over our 50-year history.

Our efforts have led to some major social, educational, governmental, and legislative advances, beginning with SIECUS swinging the public debate about whether or not to provide sex education in schools to one over which topics would be covered in these programs. This was a huge shift in understanding that some sort of sex education must be provided in schools. Over the past 50 years, some of our biggest accomplishments include developing the most valued educational resources that have led to the successful implementation of sexuality education programs across the country and around the world (including the *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten – 12th Grade*, the *National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K–12*, fact sheets, bibliographies, special reports, and targeted websites, among others). Further, we publish the annual *SIECUS State Profiles*;

and develop and deliver educational trainings for thousands of educators, advocates, parents, and healthcare and social service providers.

Since our Washington, DC-based public policy efforts were launched over 20 years ago, we've made sexuality education a priority for advocates of sexual health and rights, reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS prevention, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health and rights. We led the charge to secure federal funding for sexuality education programs; successfully encouraged the federal government to create the Office of Adolescent Health; helped to tear down federal abstinence-only-until-marriage funding streams and programs; and worked with dozens of partners to shape and successfully advance state policies that ensure young people receive comprehensive information through school-based sexuality education programs.

Despite the world that surrounded SIECUS over the past 50 years and the opposition we faced from the far right, SIECUS always persevered, achieving great advancements for sexuality education and sexual health in the U.S.

It is supporters like YOU who enabled these great achievements. And it is YOU who can continue to advance our mission by maintaining and increasing your support. I hope that we can keep on counting on you in the years ahead! 

A Summary Report on Sexuality Education Controversies, 2012-2013

In October 2013, SIECUS released its annual report of sexuality education controversies for the 2012-2013 school year. The high school class of 2013 was born alongside the World Wide Web. Most students who received a U.S. high school diploma at the conclusion of the 2012-13 school year came into the world in 1994, the year that computer engineer Tim Berners-Lee founded the World Wide Web Consortium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Sexuality education reached many of these students in one form or another during their K-12 experience. While many U.S. public and private schools provided the class of 2013 with basic information about puberty, sexual health risks, and abstinence, other schools went beyond the minimum to empower learners to understand healthy sexual relationships, gender identity, and sexual orientation, among other more challenging topics. In many communities, adults differed and sometimes clashed over the content of sexuality education to be provided in schools; in some cases, the arguments involved sexuality education *outside* of schools.

Thanks to the World Wide Web and its digital spawn – smartphones and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat – debates over sexuality education are increasingly about a virtual world outside of schools yet inextricably linked to school politics. To many in the class of 2013, the virtual world and the tangible, everyday world of their schools are seamlessly connected in a way that older people struggle daily to understand. In a New Jersey school district, the

2012-13 school year was marked by a crisis over students' use of a smartphone application (“app”) enabling users to send sexually explicit photos under the false sense of security that the evidence would quickly disappear (it did not). In West Virginia, a high school senior was welcomed to an elite college via Twitter after alleging that her principal threatened her college prospects. The reason for the principal's alleged threats? The student objected to a shaming and fear-mongering abstinence-only-until-marriage program at her school, the contents of which were posted to YouTube.


Although controversy over sexuality education in the U.S. continues to reflect debates about hard-copy curricula, state laws, and funding, the virtual world is increasingly the subject of (and forum for) conflict. The 2012-13 school year provided many examples to illustrate this digital divide. Sexuality education stakeholders across the political spectrum have had to carry their battles beyond the “suites” – that is, beyond their bricks-and-mortar statehouses and board of education meeting rooms – and into the “tweets,” framing their messages and rallying support through Twitter and other social media.

Since the dawn of the web, SIECUS has tracked and analyzed sexuality education controversies across the U.S. By highlighting select examples from states across the nation, our annual report provides advocates for comprehensive sexuality education with case studies that illustrate the language and tactics of the opposition, as well as successful approaches to managing controversy.

In the era of digital divides, these examples are needed more than ever.

In many communities where sexuality education was a source of controversy in the 2012-13 school year, it was easy to observe the classic divides between supporters and opponents of more comprehensive approaches. These familiar battles were observed against a backdrop of national political debate over sexual expression through emerging institutions such as legalized marriage equality. Even easier to observe were the divides related to understanding of and comfort levels with technology and social media. While not exactly a “generation gap,” nor a blue state/red state conflict, this divide over technology represents something more relevant in 2013 than the polarization that marked the abstinence wars of the early 2000s.

Debates over sexuality education methodology and content were plentiful across the U.S. in the just completed school year. Advocates and educators who stood up for innovation and inclusivity inspired SIECUS with their commitment to a sexually healthy America. In the 2013-14 school year, SIECUS will continue to support their efforts to advance comprehensive education that honors the right of all learners to understand – and celebrate – their sexuality.

The full report on the 2012-13 school year can be found on the SIECUS website at <http://www.siecus.org/document/docWindow.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=198&documentFormatId=252> 

SIECUS SALUTES!

Gifts made in honor of an individual can commemorate a birthday or anniversary, recognize the work of someone special, memorialize a special person, or celebrate the holidays.

Below are recent gifts to SIECUS for the period of September 2013 – February 2014 from special people to special people.

- Dr. Susan Alexander *in honor of* The Educators of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland
- Cynthia Alvarez *in honor of* Tomas Leal
- Peggy Brick *in honor of* Gayle Doll
- Patti Britton *in memory of* Holliday
- Robin Burdulis *in memory of* Adolphe Burdulis
- Dr. Michael Carrera *in memory of* Dr. Lester Kirkendall
- Dr. Michael Carrera *in honor of* Susie Wilson
- Peggy Calestro *in honor of* The Killpack Family
- Raquel Colon *in honor of* Carlos Velez
- Marlon Doles *in honor of* Tomas Leal
- Robert Friedman *in memory of* Nathan Jay Friedman
- Amy Glickman *in honor of* Ken Monteiro and Leo Blackman
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- Jason Osher *in honor of* Rick Schubel
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- Robert J. Thomas *in memory of* Doris R. Thomas
- Dr. Jeffrey Wolper *in honor of* Tomas Leal

Please consider honoring someone special in your life with a gift to SIECUS.

Are you a federal employee?

If so, you can make your donation to SIECUS using the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

SIECUS is an approved charity of the Campaign's Health and Medical Research Charities of America. **Our CFC code number is: 11848**

5 WAYS

Five Ways You Can Educate Local Policymakers

1 Visit local policymakers and tell them to support medically accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education programs in school and community-based settings.

2 Talk to your local school board about requiring sexuality education programs to be medically accurate in your school districts and communities.

3 Research local rates of HIV infection, STDs, teen pregnancy, and other statistics. Share this hard-hitting data with your local policymakers and encourage them to support initiatives that improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people.

4 Find out what your state law says about health and sexuality education and then work with a local policymaker to ensure that abstinence-only-until-marriage grantees in your community are in compliance. If funds are limited, reach out to a local university to aid in doing the evaluation.

5 Visit a local teen pregnancy prevention program, HIV prevention program, or a comprehensive youth development center to find out more about them and what you can do to help. Then, write to or visit your local policymaker and share your experience.

President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Continues Investment in Adolescent Sexual Health Promotion Programs

On March 4, 2014, President Obama released a budget demonstrating the administration's support for federal adolescent sexual health and education programs. The president's budget requested level funding for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI), funding for the programmatic portion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH), and called for additional dedicated evaluation funding for DASH. In


addition, the budget specifically called for a five-year reauthorization of the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) at the continued funding level of \$75 million per year.

For the first time since fiscal year (FY) 2010, the president's budget was free of funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM) programs through the elimination of funding for the Competitive Abstinence Education (CAE) grant program and not seeking the reauthorization of the

Title V AOUM program. Additional FY 2015 funding information is provided below. Further details are expected to be released shortly.

The president's FY 2015 budget includes:

- PREP: Five-year reauthorization, FY 2015 – FY 2019, at \$75 million per year.
- TPPI: \$105 million, not less than \$72 million for Tier 1 evidence-based programs and not less than \$24 million for Tier 2 innovative approaches (an increase of \$4 million over FY 2014 final).
- TPPI Evaluation: \$6.8 million for Public Health Services Act (PHSA) evaluation funding allocation (\$1.7 million decrease from FY 2014 final).
- DASH: Program funding level unknown at this time, however, the budget allocates \$3 million of PHSA evaluation funds for the evaluation of HIV school health activities.
- CAE: Elimination of discretionary funding for the program.
- Title V AOUM Program: No future funding allocation beyond current authorization set to expire September 30, 2014.

While largely symbolic in that Congress determines the budget and appropriations of federal funding, the President's Budget provides a critical touchstone as deliberations over FY 2015 appropriations progress in Congress. SIECUS applauds the administration's commitment to improving the sexual health and well-being of young people and looks forward to working with Congress to continue these investments. 

NOTES FROM THE RESEARCH

The February 2014 issue of the journal *Pediatrics* featured the research of Christopher D. Houck, David Barker, Christie Rizzo, Evan Hancock, Alicia Norton, and Larry K. Brown in "Sexing and Sexual Behavior in At-Risk Adolescents." Researchers analyzed self-reported data on sexting and sexual behavior from over 400 Rhode Island teens who attended five urban public middle schools. All were in seventh grade and between the ages of 12 and 14. Students were identified by school personnel "for symptoms of behavioral or emotional difficulties" and were therefore considered to be at-risk for sexual health concerns including HIV/STI or unintended pregnancy.

The students responded to questions on private laptop computers, with prior consent from parents or guardians. The researchers found that:

- Among middle school students in this study, 5% reported texting or e-mailing a sexual picture of themselves to someone else in the preceding six months.

- An additional 17% reported texting or e-mailing sexual messages (with no photo).
- Middle schoolers who had texted or e-mailed sexual messages or photos were 4-7 times more likely to have engaged in sexual activity with another person compared to their non-sexting peers.

Some adolescent sexual health stakeholders are likely to interpret this study as a confirmation that teen sexting is widespread: over 1 in 5 of the 7th graders in this sample had sent a sexual message or photo of themselves to someone in the preceding six months. In contrast, others may view the study as evidence that for most middle schoolers – particularly those who are *not* coping with emotional or behavioral problems, sexting is not a major threat to overall healthy sexual development. The authors conclude from their findings that pediatricians and other clinicians should initiate conversations about sexting with parents and their early-adolescent patients.

Progress in the Magnolia State

In February 2014, Mississippi First, the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) released *Sexuality Education in Mississippi: Progress in the Magnolia State*, a new report that details the enormous amount of progress made in educating the young people of that state. During the 2012–2013 school year, districts across the state were required to adopt a sexuality education policy and curriculum as a result of the newly passed law HB-999. Schools were allowed to choose between a strict abstinence-only approach and one that provided additional information about contraception and disease prevention called “abstinence-plus.” Of the 151 school districts and four special schools in Mississippi, 81 chose “abstinence-only,” 71 chose “abstinence plus,” and three chose a combined approach.

It is clear that something needed to change in Mississippi as the state ranks poorly in all indicators of sexual health:

- Mississippi ranks second in the country for both teen pregnancy and teen birth rates. In 2011, for example, there were 50 live births per 1,000 young women ages 15 to 19 in Mississippi compared to 31 live births per 1,000 young women nationwide. In fact, 14 percent of all live births in the state were to women under the age of 19.
- In 2011, Mississippi had the second highest rates of both chlamydia and gonorrhea in the

country for people of all ages, and the seventh highest rate of syphilis.

- Mississippi also had the seventh highest rate of HIV infection in the nation, and 30 percent of new HIV infections occurred in young adults. Moreover, the state ranked second to last in the number of high school students who report having learned about HIV in school.


“Despite overwhelmingly negative sexual health indicators, Mississippi poured millions of federal dollars into failed abstinence-only-until-marriage programs for nearly a decade. But now we have the chance to work with educators and administrators who want to do more for their students. We are especially excited by the number of schools that have participated in the CHART Initiative,” said Sanford Johnson, the Deputy Director at Mississippi First.

The CHART (Creating Healthy and Responsible Teens) Initiative was developed by Mississippi First in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health. To participate in CHART, districts must choose an abstinence-plus policy, implement one of the approved curricula (all of which are age-appropriate and evidenced-based), offer sex education starting no later than seventh grade, and designate a health education specialist to teach the program. In return, the schools receive technical assistance and professional development as well as other resources and tools to help them implement the program free of charge. The CHART Initiative is funded by the federal government's Personal Responsibility Education

Program (PREP). Thirty two school districts (nearly half of those who chose “abstinence-plus”) chose to participate in the initiative.

Despite progress made in Mississippi in recent years, there is still a lot of work to be done. Unfortunately, HB-999 has some glaring limitations. It prohibits male and female students from being taught in the same room which has caused administrative problems for some schools. It prohibits demonstrations of condoms or other contraceptive methods as well as teaching about abortion as a way to end a pregnancy. And, the law requires schools to adopt an opt-in policy which means the school has to receive written permission from parents before a student can participate. Such a policy (which is only in place in three states) creates unnecessary administrative hurdles for schools and may keep young people out of class simply because a permission slip got left in a backpack or lost in a pile of mail.

In addition to recommending that these restrictions be removed, the report suggests that the state increase investment in sexuality education so that HB-999 can be implemented more effectively (despite the mandate, 21 percent of schools reported not having taught sexuality education at all during the 2012-2013 school year). Finally, the report recommends that more schools become involved in the CHART initiative.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.siecus.org/document/docWindow.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=201&documentFormatId=257> 

FEELING BOARD

Feeling Board is SIECUS' way to introduce you to the members of our board of directors. Members come from throughout the United States. The diverse perspectives, experiences, and talents each board member brings helps to make SIECUS the vibrant organization it is today.

In this issue, we feature SIECUS Board member **Claire Cavanah, co-founder of Babeland**.

Please meet Claire Cavanah



How did you first learn about SIECUS? I learned about SIECUS through my work at Babeland. Our director of marketing, Anne Semans, suggested we make SIECUS the beneficiary of our Come for a Cause charitable giving campaign one year. Anne is a mom of school-age kids and has always spoken of SIECUS in the highest terms. We partnered with SIECUS that year and I got to know more about what the organization does and why it's held in such high esteem in progressive circles.


What brought you to the SIECUS board of directors? Elizabeth Casparian (SIECUS Board Chair) reached out to Babeland for new board members and I saw my chance

to strengthen the bond between my business and SIECUS, and to get a better sense of how sex education is faring in the US. I really liked what Elizabeth, Justin Sitron, and Monica Rodriguez told me about the board during the interview process – that they are an engaged, professional, and motivated group. I happily accepted when the position was offered to me!

Why do you think that SIECUS is important? SIECUS is the strongest voice in this country for reality-based sex education. I know from my work discussing sexuality with Babeland customers and with the mainstream media that it is really hard to carve out a space that is truly sex positive, and that includes the experiences and identities of everyone. SIECUS is committed to keeping sexuality in the national conversation as a positive force in life. I consider that incredibly important.

How does SIECUS' work help you in your life? Being part of the board helps me imagine the sex positive future that I want for my children and their peers. My work for 20 years has been with adults – helping customers choose products and encouraging them to explore and enjoy their bodies, and building a business that is a good place to work. I've always

wished we could have a direct effect on the younger generation who may or may not have access to accurate sex information. Whenever I'm asked, "what do you think is the future of what you do" I talk about what we call the "sex-positive family" – the families that our sex-positive customers might go on to create. SIECUS makes me broaden that view to a more public one, in which we are all pushing for the policy changes we need that will allow for sexuality to be treated as a part of life and learning like any other. My work with SIECUS gives me hope that we can have that future.

What advice would you give to other supporters of SIECUS for ways to help the organization and its mission? Get involved! SIECUS could use financial support, as well as visibility. For anyone who wants to spread the mission and support, SIECUS could host an evening at their home to introduce their colleagues to the organization's work and to raise funds. Supporters who work at larger companies with charitable giving options could add SIECUS to the list of organizations that benefit from matching funds. There are lots of ways to help. 

Become a Monthly SIECUS Supporter!

Can't make the large donation you'd like to all at once? Spread it out over the year instead. Sign up for an automatic donation to be made to SIECUS each month securely charged to the credit card of your choice. You can sign up for this free service by visiting the SIECUS website at www.siecus.org and clicking on the DONATE button. Or you can visit www.siecus.org/donate

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The Connecticut town of Trumbull was recently divided over the cancellation of a planned high school production of the stage musical *Rent*. The Trumbull High School principal announced the cancellation, citing the lack of a school-wide "plan" for its staging.

Jonathan Larson's Pulitzer- and Tony-winning rock opera, first performed on Broadway in 1996, covers love, drug use, and HIV in the lives of both gay and straight characters. Trumbull High School's Thespian Society planned to stage a 'school edition' which cuts out the profanity of the original. Some members of the school community challenged the principal's assertion that the cancellation was due only to a lack of adequate planning, and suggested that it was more about school administrators' fear of *Rent's* frank sexual content.

Students immediately launched an organized response eliciting local support and utilizing social media outlets, including a Facebook page created in support of *Rent*, generating over 4,200 "likes." The controversy not only caught the attention of local media, but made headlines in the *New York Times*, National Public Radio, and on blogs in the theater world.

After much pressure, in the end, the principal backpedaled and by mid-December the Facebook page 'Trumbull for Rent' announced that original March 2014 performance dates would be kept.

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

Does your company match your charitable contributions? If so, send your company's matching gift form with your donation to SIECUS.

**Information is
everything.**

**And that's
a fact of life.**



SIECUS

Sexuality Information and Education
Council of the United States

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WINTER/SPRING 2014

Monica Rodriguez, President & CEO
Jason I. Osher, Chief Operating Officer

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SIECUS Developments is a semiannual publication of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Founded in 1964, SIECUS affirms that sexuality is a fundamental part of being human, one that is worthy of dignity and respect. We advocate for the right of all people to accurate information, comprehensive education about sexuality, and sexual health services. SIECUS works to create a world that ensures social justice and sexual rights.

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Plan It!

Planned gifts are a sensible way to have a lasting social impact through the organizations you care about most. There are many personal benefits to making a planned gift to SIECUS, including making a larger charitable gift than you thought possible; providing inheritances for your heirs at a reduced tax cost; reducing your income tax and/or avoiding capital gains tax; diversifying your investment portfolio; and leaving a charitable legacy for future generations.

There are several planned giving opportunities that would help secure the critical work of SIECUS for years to come.

Bequests • Life Insurance

Retirement Plan Assets • Trusts

Your lawyer or financial advisor can help you take the next step toward making a planned gift to SIECUS and investing in a sexually healthy future for all.

If you need any additional information or assistance, please don't hesitate to call Jason Osher, chief operating officer at SIECUS, at 212.819.9770, extension 319.