



# **SEX, LIES & STEREOTYPES: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR ABSTINENCE-ONLY PROGRAMS**

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Despite a record-breaking federal deficit, funding for abstinence-only education continues to grow. In FY2006, \$215 million dollars went to these programs – a 15% increase from the previous year and more than twice the amount allocated in 2001. In total, over a billion dollars has been allocated for abstinence-only education programs over the last decade through these three major funding sources:

## ***Abstinence-Only Funding Sources***

### **Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA)**

AFLA allocates \$13 million each year to programs targeting adolescents with an abstinence-only message in an effort to prevent teen pregnancy. Signed into law in 1981, much of AFLA's early money went to antiabortion and religious groups – some of whom used AFLA funds explicitly to promote a religious agenda. This resulted in a 1983 lawsuit filed by the ACLU that was later settled out of court. Despite the fact that AFLA has been around for 25 years, its effectiveness in preventing teen pregnancy has yet to be substantiated: a recent meta-evaluation gave grantee programs ratings ranging from “barely adequate” to “completely inadequate.”

### **Title V of the Social Security Act**

Title V has utterly redefined abstinence-only education since its inception in 1996. All Title V programs must adhere to the Title V 8-point definition of abstinence education, which includes requirements such as teaching that confining sexual activity exclusively to marriage is “the expected standard of sexual activity” and that having children out of wedlock has “harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents and society.” Consistently funded at \$50 million annually, those states that accept the funds must match every four federal dollars with three state dollars, bringing the annual total to \$87.5 million. Title V has funded over 900 programs and many of the organizations that actually carry out the programs are faith-based. Every state accepts the funds, with the exception of California, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and most recently Wisconsin.

### **Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE)**

CBAE is the latest and largest federal abstinence-only funding source, with \$115 million granted for FY2006. Created in 2000, CBAE awards federal grants directly to state and local organizations that provide abstinence-only education programs that emphasize the 8 components of the Title V abstinence-only education definition. The discussion of abortion and contraceptive instruction are explicitly prohibited. However, the guidelines encourage teaching failure rates for contraceptives and emphasizing the inherent differences between men and women.

### **Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Grants & Congressional Earmarks**

The federal government also funnels money to abstinence-only through even less transparent funding sources. Some of these funding mechanisms are diverting money directly away from critical public health programs while others are classic examples of pork barrel politics aimed at pleasing the far right. These funding sources include millions of dollars in abstinence-only grants from the CDC and Congressional earmarks.

## ***Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Programs***

Despite the enormous amount of money devoted to abstinence-only education, there is very little grantee oversight or program transparency. From what is known about the activities and groups being funded, there is reason to be concerned that these programs are harmful to women and girls.

Alarming examples of how federal abstinence-only money is being spent include:

- Ø Crisis pregnancy centers, extremist anti-abortion groups infamous for misinformation and scare tactics, are awarded tens of millions of dollars in federal money each year to teach abstinence-only education in public schools. In 2006 alone, they received over \$9 million in abstinence-only education money.
  
- Ø Several widely-used abstinence-only curricula employ scare tactics, scientifically inaccurate information and gender stereotypes. For example, why kNOw's curriculum instructs students that "women gauge their happiness and judge their success by their relationships. Men's happiness and success hinge on their accomplishments."