



SEX, LIES & STEREOTYPES: PROFILES OF FEDERALLY FUNDED ABSTINENCE- ONLY GRANT RECIPIENTS

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TEEN-AID

“A gentleman stands behind a lady going up an escalator or in front of her on her way down. He goes first down the escalator to protect her in case she loses her balance.”
- *Maturing in Body and Character*¹

Teen-Aid’s abstinence-only curriculum has a history of causing controversy. Despite a lawsuit brought by the ACLU in the early 1990s and more recent criticisms of its gender bias and scientific inaccuracy, Teen-Aid continues to receive substantial federal funding. Since 2001, it has received almost \$4 million in government abstinence-only money. Its curriculum continues to be used in public schools nationwide, despite its out-dated gender stereotypes and anti-abortion bias.

What You Should Know – Overview

Founded: 1981

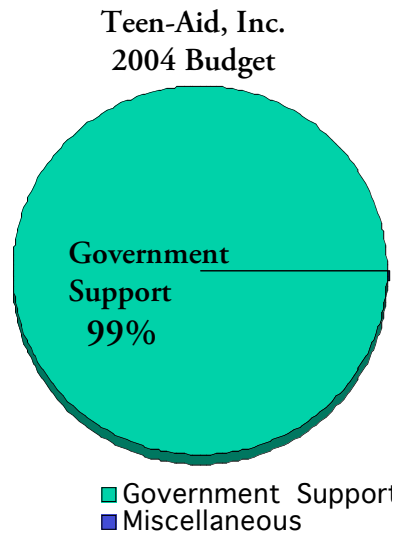
Budget: \$782,830²

Government Contributions or Grants:
\$781,852³

Website: <http://www.teen-aid.org>

Religious Affiliation: None avowed, though it received support from the American Center for Law and Justice and prominent evangelical leader Pat Robertson personally in its legal battle with the ACLU.

Key Publications: *Maturing in Body and Character* (Elementary School Abstinence-Only Curriculum); *Me, My World, My Future* (Junior High Abstinence-Only Curriculum); *Sexuality, Commitment and Family* (Senior High Abstinence-Only Curriculum)



History

Teen-Aid was founded by Steven Potter, a teacher who objected to the content of comprehensive sexual education courses being offered in Washington state schools in the late 1970s. Potter, along with a team of parents, educators and health professionals, designed the first Teen-Aid abstinence-only curriculum soon after.⁴ Teen-Aid is one of the oldest federally funded abstinence-only education programs and it has a long history of causing controversy. Its curriculum contains gender-bias, scare tactics and distortion of contraceptive effectiveness, including a comparison between using a condom and playing Russian roulette.⁵

In 1992, Planned Parenthood of Northeast Florida sued the Duval County School Board on behalf of several Jacksonville families who objected to the use of Teen-Aid's curriculum. Teen-Aid was represented by the American Center for Law and Justice, the legal arm of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, and Robertson visited Jacksonville to fundraise for Teen-Aid's legal battle.⁶ In 1994, the case was settled out of court and the district adopted a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. Teen-Aid also has a history of credibility issues. A 1994 expose published in the Textbook Letter revealed inconsistencies and falsehoods in public statements Teen-Aid made regarding awards received from the National Parent Teacher Association (it did not receive any such recognition from them) as well as statistics demonstrating the effectiveness of its curriculum.⁷

The current driving force behind Teen-Aid is LeAnna Benn, an outspoken figure who works towards creating a sustainable funding and resource infrastructure for abstinence-only education. Benn has written a number of materials meant to guide abstinence-only programs through the federal funding process. Additionally, Teen-Aid has been granted government funds for the "I've Got Connections" program, which aims to enable small organizations to "saturate" their area with abstinence-only education.⁸

Key Staff

LeAnna Benn, Executive Director

Benn has led Teen-Aid since 1991 and is a member of the Abstinence Clearinghouse Advisory Board.⁹

In Their Own Words

Gender Roles

"As ladies and gentlemen walk, women may check their appearance in the windows but it is not appropriate for the man."

- *Maturing in Body and Character*¹⁰

“A gentleman stands behind a lady going up an escalator or in front of her on her way down. He goes first down the escalator to protect her in case she loses her balance.”

- *Maturing in Body and Character*¹¹

Anti-Abortion Bias

“Pro-Choice advocates *contend* that every child should be a wanted child and that a woman should have the right to abort an unwanted pregnancy...Pro-Life advocates *point to the biological fact* that human life begins at conception and that abortion takes the life of an unborn child...”(emphasis added)

- *Me, My World, My Future*¹²

“Studies show that five to ten percent of women will never again be pregnant after having a legal abortion.”

- *Me, My World, My Future*¹³

“Premature birth, a major cause of mental retardation, is increased up to 300% following the abortion of the first pregnancy.”

- *Me, My World, My Future*¹⁴

Medical Accuracy of Abstinence-Only Curricula

“The term ‘medical accuracy’ is a misnomer. Medical information evolves. Medical professionals use the term ‘medical opinion’ so educators, unless they want the State to be the gatekeeper of these ‘fact,’ (*sic*) should use the term ‘medically referenced’ since various medical opinions are considered appropriate.”

- LeAnna Benn, Teen-Aid Executive Director, responding to criticism of the scientific inaccuracies found in numerous abstinence-only curricula.¹⁵

Sources

¹ LeAnna Benn and Alfred J. Derby, M.D., *Maturing in Body and Character* (Teacher's Manual), 274 (1999).

² *IRS 990 Form, FY 2005: Teen-Aid*, available at <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2005/911/225/2005-911225663-0202897c-9.pdf>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ C. Carter, *Sex Education Curriculum Stresses Abstinence. Family Life Course Explicit. Teen-Aid Says, "The Sexual Revolution is Over!"*, *Union Leader*, Nov. 12, 1990.

⁵ *SIECUS State Profiles 2005: Washington*, SIECUS Website, available at <http://www.siecus.org/policy/states/2005/mandates/WA.html>.

⁶ *Teaching Fear: the Religious Right's Campaign Against Sexuality Education*, People for the American Way Foundation Website, available at <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=2012>.

⁷ William J. Bennetta, *Keep The Dumb, Keep Them Pregnant: Part 1*, Textbook Letter, Jan./Feb. 1994, available at <http://www.textbookleague.org/46teen1.htm>.

⁸ *I've Got Connections*, Teen-Aid Website, available at http://www.teen-aid.org/Ive_Got_Connections.htm.

⁹ *National Director: LeAnna Benn*, Teen-Aid Website, available at http://www.teen-aid.org/About_Teen-Aid/Getting_to_Know_Teen-Aid/National_Director.htm.

¹⁰ *Supra* note 1 at 273.

¹¹ *Supra* note 1.

¹² Nancy Roach and LeAnna Benn, *Me, My World, My Future: Teacher's Manual*, 296-7 (1993).

¹³ *Id.* at 205.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ LeAnna Benn, *Critics of Abstinence Education*, Teen-Aid Website, available at http://www.teen-aid.org/Abstinence_Education/Insight_Articles/Critics_of_Abstinence.htm.