

Find Out More and Take Action!

Check out Legal Momentum's Sexuality and Family Rights Program at www.legalmomentum.org to read more about extreme conservative and religious groups receiving federal funding for abstinence-only. Get the latest information and receive action alerts about how you can help fight this dangerous program.

Organize with local high school and university students to demand that sex education in your district be free of gender-bias and contain accurate information about contraception. To view a list of groups receiving abstinence-only funding in your state visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/youthdivision/programs/locate.htm>.

If you've ever been taught abstinence-only education then click on to the Sexuality and Family Rights Program at www.legalmomentum.org and take our survey - or simply e-mail your comments to us at abstinence@legalmomentum.org. We want to hear your story!

Legal Momentum's Sexuality and Family Rights program works to protect women's autonomy, sexuality and place in society and to expose the current extreme right wing's promotion of a sexist agenda for women that is being funded by the federal government.

Contact Legal Momentum for more information and to receive regular updates of our work to protect the rights of girls and women.



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SEX, LIES, AND STEREOTYPES How Abstinence-Only Education Harms Women

At a time when teenagers need honest and comprehensive information about the risks of sexual activity—and how to responsibly handle those risks if they do decide to become sexually active—the federal government instead continues to preach abstinence-only.

Abstinence-only education relies on a dangerous cocktail of gender stereotypes, scare tactics, homophobia, shame, and misinformation. At their core, these programs are an ineffective and dangerous attempt to keep teens ignorant about sex and are promoted by groups that wrongly believe that quality sex education leads to promiscuity and homosexuality.

Young people don't need a lecture on morals. Young women and girls in particular need to be empowered with positive messages and accurate information that give them the confidence and ability to make healthy and informed life and relationship choices.

As federal funding for abstinence-only programs grows beyond \$200 million *per year*, learn how just-say-no programs harm women and try to bring us backwards and what you can do to oppose them.

Damaging and Outdated Gender Stereotypes

Many of the federally funded abstinence-only curricula reinforce outdated gender stereotypes about sexuality. Portraying men as sexual aggressors and women as naturally demure and chaste, these programs deny women's sexuality. Sexist ideas, such as blaming the way a woman dresses for how men treat her, run throughout the curricula and cast women as second-class citizens.

"In his best selling book, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, John Gray captivated readers with age-old truths. These long-standing truths, however, had been almost forgotten in the age of politically correct thinking. Now it is considered improper to consider men and women anything but equal."

—*Why kNOw Abstinence Education Program*

"In deciding to have intercourse, women are more likely than men to be in love, want a mutually satisfying relationship, and are interested in what their partner feels and thinks... Men, true to the stereotype, are more likely to engage in sex with a warning to the woman that there will be no commitment."

—*FACTS and Reasons Teacher's Manual*

Miseducation about Contraception

Abstinence-only programs keep young women and girls ignorant about sex and prevent them from making independent and informed decisions. The largest federally-funded abstinence program prohibits discussing abortion. Contraceptive education consists solely of discussing contraceptive failure rates. Teenagers are taught abstinence as the sole means of protecting themselves from sexually transmitted infections ("STI's") and pregnancy.

The misinformation taught by these curricula includes inflated condom failure rates, false characterizations of STIs transmission, and grossly exaggerated risks associated with abortion. This campaign of misinformation is simply a transparent attempt to scare teens into abstinence.

"Diagrams of internal organs are acceptable, but images or pictures of external genitalia in any form, whether diseased or healthy, can be detrimental to the health of young men and women's minds."

—*Abstinence 101*

Why kNOw Abstinence Education Programs inaccurately claims that "[i]n heterosexual sex, condoms fail to prevent HIV approximately 31% of the time." True figures demonstrate that consistent condom use reduces HIV/AIDS transmission by 85%.

"There is no such thing as 'safe' or 'safer' premarital sex... Using contraception does not change this."

—*FACTS and Reasons*

Anti-Abortion Bias

More than a billion dollars in federal funds have been allocated for abstinence-only education since the program began. So-called "crisis pregnancy centers"—run by anti-abortion groups—have profited enormously, receiving almost \$130 million and growing. These crisis pregnancy centers are fake abortion clinics established by anti-abortion groups in order to delay or deter pregnant women who seek abortions by providing anti-abortion materials or impeding their access to abortion services through deceptive tactics. This anti-abortion ideology runs through their abstinence-only work as well.

FACTS About Me inaccurately defines conception as "the union of the sperm from the man and the egg from the woman. This is when life begins and is also known as fertilization." Yet the National Institutes of Health and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists define pregnancy as beginning when a fertilized egg implants in the lining of the uterus.

"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."

—*Me, My World, My Future*

Stigmatizing Homosexuality

Programs that require teens to remain abstinent until marriage present LGBTQ youth with a daunting choice: pretend to be straight or remain celibate, forever. Abstinence-only programs teach students that homosexuality is unnatural, harmful and immoral. This rhetoric contributes to homophobic attitudes and stigmatizes anyone even associated with LGBTQ people.

"Research shows the homosexual lifestyle is not a healthy alternative for males or females. The male and female body are not anatomically suited to accommodate sexual relations with members of the same sex. Sexual practices in the homosexual lifestyle are considered very dangerous for disease, infection, etc. This lifestyle should not be encouraged as healthy or as an equal alternative to marriage."

—*Abstinence 101*

"[S]exual attraction is innate between men and women. There are clear anthropologic images which show there is a longstanding understanding of the duality of the sexes and a yearning for union which we know manifests itself in sexual attraction."

—*FACTS and Reasons*