

APRIL 2007

Abstinence Funding

ISSUE BRIEF

The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) is concerned with the significant increase in federal and state resources directed toward abstinence-only education programs for youth. There continues to be no scientific evidence to indicate abstinence-only programs have any efficacy in delaying the sexual debut of youth. An Institute of Medicine Report recommends that “Congress, as well as other federal, state, and local policymakers, eliminate the requirements that public funds be used for abstinence-only education, and that states and local school districts implement and continue to support age-appropriate comprehensive sex education and condom availability.”¹ Moreover, comprehensive sexuality education programs have been found effective in delaying the onset of sexual intercourse, reducing the number of sexual partners, and increasing contraception and condom use.² NASTAD strongly supports the funding of abstinence-based comprehensive sexuality education and has endorsed legislation that creates a dedicated funding stream for this purpose. Funding for youth-targeted HIV prevention education continues to be an important component of state and local health department HIV/AIDS prevention activities. NASTAD supports an increase in federal funding for domestic HIV prevention through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention. In addition, NASTAD supports increased funding to CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) to strengthen HIV prevention education efforts in schools.

ABSTINENCE FUNDING STREAMS

Currently, three federal programs fund abstinence-only education. Since 1996, the U.S. government has spent

over \$1.2 billion dollars on abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Of that amount, almost \$800 million has been spent in the last eight years.

Adolescent Family Life Demonstration Grants Program

Enacted in 1981, the goal of the Adolescent Family Life (AFL) program, administered by the Office of Population Affairs (OPA) is to prevent premarital adolescent pregnancy by promoting the values of chastity and self-discipline, as well as to promote adoption as the preferred option for pregnant adolescents and to provide care services for pregnant and parenting adolescents. The law, created under Title XX of the Public Health Service Act, earmarked at least two-thirds of the funding for demonstration grants for care services and not more than one-third for prevention education programs. AFL-funded sexuality education must: (1) not include religious references, (2) be medically accurate, (3) respect the principle of self-determination regarding contraceptive referral for teenagers, and (4) not allow grantees to use church sanctuaries for their programs or to give presentations in parochial schools during school hours. Within these limitations, AFL funds abstinence-only programs. AFL programs were appropriated \$13 million for FY2007.

Programs funded through AFL for abstinence-only education are tied to the eight-point definition in the Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) law of 1996. As a result of report language in the FY1997 Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations bill, prevention programs funded under AFL programs must comply with the eight-point definition. The language also waived the two-thirds care/one-third prevention funding formula by devoting more funding to prevention than to care. These changes have been included in every subsequent Labor-HHS Appropriations bill.

Abstinence Education Formula Block Grant Program

The 1996 welfare reform law, Section 510 (b) of Title V of the Social Security Act, guaranteed \$50 million annually over five years for abstinence-only-until-marriage education grants to states. In February 2006, TANF was reauthorized through FY2010. Those states that choose to accept Section 510(b) funds, administered through the Administration for Children and Families, are required to match every four federal dollars with three state dollars. States have distributed the 510(b) grant funds to education agencies, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and statewide programs. The funds can only be used for the exclusive purpose of teaching the benefits of abstinence. Recipients of these funds may not provide a participating adolescent with any other information regarding sexual conduct in the same setting as the abstinence programs. As of April 2, 2007 eight states (California, Connecticut, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island and Wisconsin) have rejected Title V abstinence money.

Programs that use the 510(b) funds are required to adhere to an eight-point definition of abstinence-only programs. Abstinence education is defined by Section 510 (b) as an education or motivational program that:

1. has as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;
2. teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
3. teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;
4. teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity;
5. teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;
6. teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;

7. teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances; and
8. teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

While recipients are not required to emphasize all eight principles, they are not allowed to contradict any of them in information they provided to young people. In addition, recipients of the Section 510(b) grant funding are only allowed to discuss contraception in terms of failure rates. A recent ten-year federally-funded evaluation of abstinence-only programs found that teens in abstinence-only programs were no more likely to remain abstinent, delay age of first sexual intercourse, or have fewer sexual partners than teens not in the abstinence-only programs. The evaluation also found that teens in the abstinence-only programs were far likelier to state that condoms were never effective in protecting against HIV (21 percent) or HPV and herpes (23 percent).³

Community-Based Abstinence Education Grants

Established in FY2001, the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) Grants, administered by the Agency for Children and Families, award competitive grants to state and local entities running community-based abstinence-only programs. This includes state and local health departments. This funding is also tied to the Section 510(b) eight-point definition. But in certain ways the CBAE grants are far more restrictive than funding granted under Section 510(b). Unlike 510 (b)-funded programs, CBAE-funded activities must teach all eight components of the federal definition of abstinence education, must target adolescents ages 12-18, and are specifically barred from providing young people with any other education regarding sexual conduct. In FY2007, Congress funded the program \$113 million.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION FUNDING STREAMS

Multiple federal funding streams do not exist to provide comprehensive sexual education like there are for abstinence-only education. The only federal funding



for comprehensive sexual education goes through CDC's DASH program which provides funding to state and local education agencies to support the development and implementation of effective HIV prevention programs for school-aged children. The programs are locally designed to target those most at risk for sexual-risk taking behaviors and often include an evaluation component. In FY2007, DASH's HIV prevention school health program was funded at \$42 million. Members of Congress are looking at legislation to provide more federal support for comprehensive sexual education.

Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act

The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act, HR 1653/S 972, sponsored by Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) provides funding to states to support a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. The legislation, endorsed by NASTAD, allows states to receive federal funds for medically accurate, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in schools that includes information on both abstinence and contraception, from both a values and public health perspective. REAL authorizes state programs that operate under a nine-point definition of "family life education programs" that stands in sharp contrast to the eight-point definition of Section 510(b) that now governs federal abstinence funding. REAL defines a program of "family life education" as one that:

1. is age-appropriate and medically accurate;
2. does not teach or promote religion;
3. teaches that abstinence is the only sure way to avoid pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases;
4. stresses the value of abstinence while not ignoring those young people who have had or are having sexual intercourse;
5. provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to prevent pregnancy;
6. provides information about the health benefits and side effects of all contraceptives and barrier methods as a means to reduce the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;

7. encourages family communication about sexuality between parent and child;
8. teaches young people the skills to make responsible decisions about sexuality, including how to avoid unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances and how not to make unwanted verbal, physical, and sexual advances; and
9. teaches young people how alcohol and drug use can affect responsible decision making.


The REAL Act redirects the federal government's sexuality education spending toward more comprehensive models with demonstrated effectiveness to help young people delay sexual debut and protect themselves should they decide to become sexually active.

PRESIDENT'S FY2008 BUDGET

The President's budget, released on February 5, 2007, increases funding for abstinence education programs to a total of \$204 million for FY2008. This is a \$28 million increase over FY2007. In 2004, HHS integrated abstinence education activities by consolidating the majority of abstinence funding under the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). This includes \$50 million in state abstinence grants and \$113 million in CBAE Grants, of which up to \$10 million can be used to fund the national abstinence education campaign. The President proposed funding the Adolescent Family Life program, at \$13 million, and an additional \$4 million is provided for abstinence program evaluations. The President's budget also flat funds DASH's comprehensive school health program at \$42 million. The budget proposal flat funds the Title X Family Planning program at \$283 million. The Title X Family Planning program provides funding to family planning clinics to provide reproductive health care to low-income women.

NASTAD opposes providing increased resources to abstinence-only education programs. Increasing funding for comprehensive HIV prevention programs targeted at youth would be a more effective use of the money.





¹ No Time to Lose: Getting More from HIV Prevention, M.S. Ruiz, A.R. Gable, E.H. Kaplan, M.A. Stoto, H. Fineberg, and J. Trusell, editors (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Medicine, 2000), p.6.

² D. Kirby, No Easy Answer (Washington, D.C. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997); D. Kirby, Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy (Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001); and David Satcher, The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior, June 2001.

³ Impacts of four Title V Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs, C. Trenholm, B. Devaney, K. Fortson, L. Quay, J. Wheeler, M. Clark (Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.)