



FAMILY ISSUE FACT SHEET

No. 2008-04 (February 2008)

Abstinence Until Marriage Education Funding

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstinence until marriage education programs are designed to encourage and promote abstinence as a healthy, wise, and safe lifestyle among students. Congress passed a bill allowing federal funds for these important programs, provided there were state matching funds available.

Arizona's abstinence programs have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of teen pregnancies, sexually-transmitted diseases, and number of teens having sex outside of marriage. Despite these results, Governor Napolitano has recommended cutting the program by \$750,000 in the 2008 budget, and completely eliminating it by 2009. She has also refused the federal matching funds. It is imperative that both the state and federal funds be maintained so that Arizona can continue on its track of promoting safe, healthy lifestyles.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, Congress passed a welfare reform bill that included federal funding for states providing matching funds for abstinence education programs. The federal law defines "Abstinence Until Marriage (ATM) Education" as including the following components:

1. Have as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological and health gains to be realized from abstaining from sexual activity.
2. Teach abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children.
3. Teach 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. Teach that a mutually faithful, monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity.
5. Teach that sexual activity outside the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.
6. Teach that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful effects for the child, the child's parents, and society.
7. Teach young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increases vulnerability to sexual advances.
8. Teach the importance of gaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

The Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS) began a state ATM program in 1998, including a media campaign, a web site (www.sexcanwait.com), training programs for teachers, and grants for abstinence education programs. Since its implementation, DHS has reported a decrease in the number of teen pregnancies in Arizona. The number of teen pregnancies was up to 22 percent higher for teens who did not participate in abstinence

programs than those who did. In addition, DHS studies found that after the classes, over 50 percent of students who had sex prior to participation in these abstinence programs decided to curtail further sexual activity until marriage.

In 2003, Governor Napolitano vetoed the state matching funds for the abstinence programs in the state budget. A year later, the Governor allowed abstinence programs to find private matching funds in order to draw down the federal dollars. During this time, the number of schools providing these programs decreased, as did the scope of the other abstinence programs, as the program faculty had to spend more time in fund raising and promotion than on the actual implementation of these programs.

An appropriation of \$1 million was reinstated in 2005, and this was increased to \$1.5 million in 2006. It is essential for these funds to continue being provided.

TALKING POINTS

- **The Arizona abstinence programs are widely effective in reducing teen pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases.** A study by the Arizona Department of Health Services reports, during the first five years of state funding, a “significant... decrease in the number of STDs diagnosed” among students who participated in the abstinence programs. The study also shows a decline in the number of pregnancies in girls 17-19 years of age who took the abstinence classes.
- **Abstinence programs actually save money in Arizona.** According to the National Center to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, teen mothers cost Arizona an estimated \$268 million in 2004. Teaching these young women healthy lifestyles and encouraging abstinence will continue to cut down this significant cost, and statistics show that these programs are working in Arizona. From 1995 to 2005, the Arizona Department of Health Services reported a 31 percent decrease in teen pregnancies in Arizona, which directly results in savings to Arizona’s general fund.
- **A majority of parents prefer an abstinence approach to sex education.** A Zogby poll conducted in 2007 showed that when parents understand what abstinence education teaches, support jumps from 40 percent to 60 percent. By comparison, support for comprehensive sex education dropped from 50 percent to 30 percent.¹
- **Abstinence is the only way to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases.** All birth control medicines come with a disclaimer that states they will not protect against sexually-transmitted diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control, condoms, widely promoted in comprehensive sex education programs, also do not protect against all STDs. In addition, condoms have a failure rate of approximately 15 percent among teenagers. Teaching abstinence shows students the ultimate way to prevent pregnancy and STDs, which significantly benefits Arizona’s society, economics, and public health.

CONCLUSION

Abstinence until marriage education is the most effective means of reducing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. State funds for this program should be retained in Arizona’s general fund.

¹ National Abstinence Education Association. “Parents Prefer Abstinence Education 2 to 1”. May 3, 2007.
http://www.abstinenceassociation.org/newsroom/pr_050307_parents_prefer_2to1.html