

Put Prevention First

OPPOSE Abstinence-only Funding Budget Items 297 #7 Senator Cuccinelli and 297 #10s Senator Hanger

Budget Items 297 #7 and 297 #10s in Senate Bill 30 would add \$275,098 each year from the General Fund that is used to match Federal Title V Abstinence-only grant funding. This funding was eliminated from Governor Kaine's proposed 2008 budget because formal program evaluations at the federal level indicate abstinence-only programs are no more effective than comprehensive programs that include information on abstinence and contraception.

Currently, Family Life Education in Virginia is abstinence-based.

- Section §22.1-207.1 of the Code of Virginia directs the Board of Education to develop Family Life Education Guidelines for a comprehensive, sequential family life education curriculum in grades K through 12. The guidelines are not mandated. School divisions are allowed to use the state-approved Standards of Learning objectives or develop their own learner objectives.
- The Guidelines were developed with input from public school staff (including administrators and teachers), state agencies, parent groups, and not-for-profit organizations that provide family life services.
- The guidelines include learning objectives about abstinence, contraception and disease prevention.

Family Life Education programs in Virginia should also be evidence-based. Only comprehensive, medically accurate Family Life Education allows for responsible decision-making and pregnancy prevention.

- Formal program evaluations commissioned by the U.S. Congress found that when compared to a control group, students who attended a Title V abstinence-only program were no more likely to delay sexual activity or have fewer partners. *My Choice, My Future!* in Powhatan, Virginia was one of the four programs evaluated in this study.¹
- Abstinence-only programs have also been cited for containing medically inaccurate information. In 2004, a report released by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform found that the curricula used by *more than two-thirds* of government-funded abstinence-only programs contain misleading or inaccurate information about contraception, human reproduction, and sexually transmitted infections.²
- Research shows that teaching both abstinence and contraception does not encourage or increase sexual activity. Also, teenagers who receive comprehensive sexuality education that includes discussion of abstinence *and* contraception are more likely than those who receive abstinence-only messages to delay sexual activity and to use contraceptives when they do become sexually active.^{3,4}

¹ *Impacts of Four Title V, Section 510 Abstinence Education Programs*. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. April, 2007.

² *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-only Education Programs*. United States House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform. December 2004.

³ National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001.

⁴ Kirby D (2001) *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy* Washington, DC National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Virginia Pro-Choice Coalition

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