



Report: Abstinence-Only Sex Ed Ineffective

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A federally funded report indicates that sex education programs that focus on abstinence don't work.

On April 13, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released the study of 2,000 youth showing that those who participated in abstinence-only programs were no more likely to abstain from sex than their peers who did not participate.

The study is the latest in a series of research confirming that abstinence-only programs not only don't work, but also present youth with dangerous misinformation that could put them at increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. During the last five years, similar studies of abstinence-only programs in Arizona, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Texas have come to the same conclusion, the gay-rights organization reported.

A December 2004 congressional report commissioned by U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., found that "over 80 percent of the abstinence-only curricula, used by over two-thirds of [abstinence-only program] grantees in 2003, contain false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health." Congress has allocated \$1.1 billion to abstinence-only sex education programs through various funding streams since 1996.

The NGLTF is one of 287 organizations working with the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. that are urging Congress to let funding for abstinence-only programs expire and instead encourage schools to teach comprehensive programs that provide young people with the information they need to take care of themselves.

"Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been utterly wasted on 'abstinence-only until marriage' programs," NGLTF Executive Director Matt Foreman said in a statement April 16. "Why? To appease a rabidly vocal minority that cares more about getting our government to promote their religious ideology than they do about the health of young people."

Foreman added that such sex education programs have been "particularly insulting" to gays and lesbians because the most vocal opponents of marriage equality have been abstinence-only's most vocal proponents.