



Abstinence Only Until Marriage Programs Violate Our Basic Rights



Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs:

A Brief History

What Programs Must Teach

Reality Behind Programs

In Their Own Words

Harmful Consequences

Public Support

Exporting a Failed Policy

Our Basic Rights Violated

Supporting Organizations



TAKEN ACTION!




Violate Human Rights

Access to comprehensive, medically accurate information about sexual health—including reproductive health and HIV/AIDS—is not only a major public health concern, it is recognized as a human right. At the most basic level, several international agreements recognize that all people have the right to “seek, receive and impart information of all kinds,” including information about their health.¹ Young people, in particular, are often both most in need and least likely to receive this information. Denying young people access to comprehensive sexuality education stands in direct violation of major international agreements that require governments to provide unencumbered, non-discriminatory access to education about sexuality, including HIV prevention.

On the international stage, the United States has repeatedly endorsed the right to education about sexuality through its participation in forging consensus agreements such as the *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA)*,² the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*,³ and the *Millennium Development Goals*. The United States has also signed, though not ratified, three international treaties that establish a right to health education and information: the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*,⁴ the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*,⁵ and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.⁶ The human rights treaties ratified by the United States—the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*—also address this issue. CERD specifically provides for equal access to information regarding health, while the ICCPR sets out a more general right to information.

Adolescents have been a special focus of concern as the international community addresses health and human rights. The approach reflected in many international documents is one that reaffirms the rights of adolescents to accurate information that will enable them to make informed decisions about their health. For example, the most comprehensive agreement on sexual and reproductive rights, the *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA)*, requires governments to ensure that information and services are available to adolescents “to help them understand their sexuality and protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and subsequent fertility.”⁷ The most comprehensive agreement on the rights of young people, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Child's Convention)*, likewise requires governments to “ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health.”⁸ The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the *Child's Convention*, specifically states in its general comment on HIV/AIDS that children have the right to access adequate information related to HIV/AIDS prevention.⁹

- NARAL Pro-Choice Wyoming**
- National Abortion Federation (NAF)**
- National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors**
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum**
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)**
- National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)**
- National Center for Transgender Equality**
- National Coalition for LGBT Health**
- National Coalition of Abortion Providers**
- National Coalition of STD Directors**
- National Council of Jewish Women**
- National Council of Women's Organizations**
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)**
-  **National Education Association (NEA)**
- National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA)**
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)**
- National Health Law Program**
- National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF)**
- National Organization For Women (NOW)**
- National Partnership for Women & Families**
- National Women's Health Network**
- National Women's Law Center**
- National Youth Advocacy Coalition**
- Nebraska Coalition on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting**
- Needle Exchange Program of Asheville (NC)**
- New Jersey Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action**
- New Jersey Chapter, Sierra Club**
- New Jersey Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (NJRCR)**