

Despite a modest decline in national teen pregnancy rates, Colorado continues to experience an increase in teen pregnancies. In addition, Colorado's sexually active teens contract sexually transmitted diseases at alarming rates.

Governor Bill Owens recognizes the high cost of pre-marital sexual activity. It engulfs young people in social, emotional, physical, spiritual and financial harm. As part of his belief that state government should support and strengthen the family, Governor Owens assigned a full-time director to work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to implement a statewide abstinence education program. Governor Owens supports abstinence education because it provides Colorado's youth with the best opportunity to experience life unencumbered by the negative consequences of teen sexual activity.

What is abstinence-only education?

Abstinence education helps teens build brighter futures through beneficial relationships. These programs use diverse methods to:

- Assist young people with the development of the life skills and support network necessary to resist the pressures that lead to premarital sex;
- Educate parents on effective ways to promote positive behavior in their children;
- Encourage a culture that views abstinence as the standard through which Colorado's youth have the greatest potential to achieve success now and in the future.

How is abstinence-only education implemented in Colorado?

Governor Owens believes that abstinence education will reduce out-of-wedlock births and sexually transmitted diseases in teens and encourage sexual abstinence until marriage. The Colorado Abstinence Education Program can accomplish this by:

- Supporting abstinence-only education programs for school age children, males and females, grades 5 through 12;
- Developing and implementing strategic, statewide communication efforts designed to increase awareness and acceptance of abstinence as a healthy choice and a positive lifestyle;
- Involving parents and the community in the development and implementation of programs and activities that are accessible and promote abstinence.

Under the guidance of the Abstinence Education Steering Committee, the state solicits proposals from abstinence programs and funds educational efforts across Colorado. Currently, eight organizations receive funds to support programs for teens and their families in communities throughout the state. In addition to continued support for education programs, the state will launch a public awareness campaign in the fall of 2000.

How is abstinence-only education funded in Colorado?

On August 22, 1996, Public Law 104-193 added a federal grant program, *Abstinence Education*, to Title V of the Social Security Act. Congress authorized \$50 million in annual federal funds and distributed this money to the states in the form of block grants.

Colorado receives \$544,383 in Title V abstinence education funding annually, and the state must provide a \$3.00 match for every \$4.00 received in federal funding. Colorado's match comes from myriad public and private sources at both the local and state levels.

For more information, contact:

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