



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### ISSUE: ABSTINENCE ONLY PROGRAMS DO NOTHING TO PROMOTE SAFE SEX IN LGBT YOUTH

**POLICY DESCRIPTION:** Abstinence-only programs teach abstinence before marriage. As LGBT people are in 48 states and the District of Columbia prohibited from marrying, “abstinence only” education in effect teaches the unacceptability of any sexual activity for LGBT people. From a public health standpoint, it does nothing to promote safe sexual practices that prevent or limit the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

Title V, Section 510(b) of the Social Security Act, defines all federally funded abstinence-only programs. The definition currently states:

**A** has as its exclusive purpose teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity;

**B** teaches abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;

**C** teaches that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems;

**D** teaches that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of sexual activity;

**E** teaches that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects;

**F** teaches that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequences for the child, the child's parents, and society;



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**G** teaches young people how to reject sexual advances and how alcohol and drug use increase vulnerability to sexual advances, and

**H** teaches the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.

This definition stops programs funded by this money (which is the only federally funded sex education) from discussing the reality of LGBT students. Funded teachers cannot answer questions as simple as how to use a condom.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:** The definition of abstinence-only-until-marriage programs with the strict guidelines for programs that include defining marriage as between a man and a woman is unsalvageable. The program should be defunded in the new Administration's budget.

The messages from abstinence-only programs tell LGBT young people that they can never live a healthy, moral life, and children of LGBT parents that their families are deficient.

**PROCESS BY WHICH OUR RECOMMENDATION CAN BE IMPLEMENTED:** As stated above, the program is not salvageable and should be eliminated in favor of more comprehensive education to limit pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. This program is under the Division of Abstinence Education of the HHS/ACF Family and Youth Services Bureau. The division is overseen by Scott Riggins, Acting Director, who began at Heritage Community Services. Heritage Community Services is a well known ideologically based abstinence-only program in South Carolina.