



# Girl Connection

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE ADOLESCENT FEMALES  
IOWA GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES TASK FORCE  
FEBRUARY 2005

## Sexuality Education

December 1, 2004, U.S. Representative Henry Waxman released the report, *The Content of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*. The report found that over two-thirds of the most frequently used abstinence-only sexuality education curricula “contain false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health.” The distorted information falls into five broad categories:

- 1) Contains false information about the effectiveness of contraceptives
- 2) Contains false information about the risks of abortion
- 3) Blurs religion and science
- 4) Treats stereotypes about girls and boys as scientific fact
- 5) Contains scientific errors

Eleven of the top thirteen abstinence-only curricula are documented as having “major errors and distortions of public health information.” Of those eleven, six are used by grantees in Iowa.

A.C. Green’s Game Plan, WAIT Training, Navigator,  
Choosing the Best Way, Choosing the Best Path and Choosing the Best Life

The report also includes specifics regarding the distortions in the various curricula. One such example demonstrates the reinforcement of harmful female/male stereotypes: “The father gives the bride to the groom because he is the one man who has had the responsibility of protecting her throughout her life. He is now giving his daughter to the only other man who will take over this protective role.”

Many other examples are given as well, including the following:

- “Another curriculum states that ‘twenty-four chromosomes from the mother and twenty-four chromosomes from the father join to create this new individual’; the correct number is 23.”
- “The curriculum erroneously states that touching another person’s genitals ‘can result in pregnancy’.”
- “...research cited in the curriculum found an association between heart disease and a type of Chlamydia (called Chlamydia pneumoniae) that is not sexually transmitted.”

In addition to the above examples, the report finds, “These curricula also say nothing about the importance of Pap smears.” However, curricula were found to state that sexual activity can lead to cancer. Human papilloma virus (HPV) can rarely lead to cervical cancer and is highly preventable if young women are made aware that getting regular Pap smears is the best way to detect HPV early.

In contrast to the incorrect information of the examined curricula, scientifically accurate information is provided within the report on select examples.

We are also informed that although these curricula are funded by the federal government (\$170 million in 2005 – more than double the funding level of 2001), they are “not reviewed for accuracy by the federal government.”<sup>1</sup>

To download the complete 26 page report, go to [www.democrats.reform.house.gov](http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov)

## **“Programs must address sexuality, including pregnancy and parenting.”**

Component #7

from *Providing Gender-Specific Services for Adolescent Female Offenders: Guidelines & Resources*,  
a publication of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women.

“...girls need information that extends beyond the possible consequences of sexual acts. Girls also need information about reproductive anatomy and physiology, dealing with pregnancy and motherhood, and confronting the risk of HIV-AIDS. Girls need opportunities to identify their personal sexual limits and to rehearse communicating those limits to a potential partner. They need opportunities to explore media messages about relationships, body image, and gender role expectations. Moreover, girls need opportunities ‘to explore the meaning and value of sexual pleasure, the establishment and nurture of committed relationships, and the exploration of conflicting cultural messages about sexual behavior.’ Further, programs should be inclusive of accurate, unbiased sexuality information that may be meaningful to adolescents who are lesbian or bisexual, who are questioning their sexual orientation, or who have engaged in same-sex sexual behaviors.”

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1. United States House of Representatives, Committee On Government Reform— Minority Staff Special Investigations Division (December 2004). *The Content Of Federally Funded Abstinence-Only Education Programs*. Washington D.C.

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## **The Girl Connection**

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For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force,  
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