

GROUPS FILE LEGAL COMPLAINT AGAINST GOVERNMENT SPREADING FALSE AND MISLEADING SEX EDUCATION

SIECUS and Advocates for Youth Use Data Quality ACT to Challenge Abstinence-Only Programs

WASHINGTON, DC (September 13, 2005) Today, Advocates for Youth and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) filed a challenge to the federal government's funding of inaccurate and ineffective abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

Filed with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the guidelines set forth by the Data Quality Act of 2000, Advocates for Youth and SIECUS issued the challenge to the quality of data and information disseminated through abstinence-only programs sponsored by the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) under HHS.

The Data Quality Act (DQA) directs the Office of Management and Budget to issue government-wide guidelines that "provide policy and procedural guidance to Federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of information (including statistical information) disseminated by Federal agencies."

Over 100 groups are currently funded by ACF to conduct abstinence-only education. Eleven of the 13 curricula most commonly used by these grantees contain false, inaccurate or incomplete information, according to a recent Congressional report.

"Those who make the rules must abide by the rules," said William Smith, Vice President for Public Policy at SIECUS. "HHS' own guidelines were specifically designed to ensure that only high quality and scientifically sound data is disseminated to the American public."

"The false and inaccurate information found in these abstinence-only-until-marriage programs clearly violates the Agency's own directive," concluded Smith.

Written by a conservative lobbyist and slipped in amidst an appropriations bill without Congressional discussion, the Data Quality Act provides a means to censor information about public health risks that might otherwise result in restrictions on big business. "Turnabout is fair play," said James Wagoner, President of Advocates for Youth. "We'll use this and any other tool at our disposal to ensure that youth receive honest and *accurate* sex education."

"Never has so much government money been spent on so many programs with so little impact and so little oversight," concluded Wagoner, citing the \$1 billion spent on inaccurate abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.

SIECUS and Advocates for Youth have asked ACF and HHS to immediately cease sponsorship of programs that fail to provide medically accurate, complete sexual health information.