

President Obama Wants to Do This to Abstinence-Only Programs

In his proposed federal budget for 2017, President Obama has removed all funding for abstinence-only education.

The president's budget proposal cuts \$10 million yearly that is used to provide grants from the Department of Health and Human Services to support abstinence-only programs. His administration, and opponents of the programs, have always argued the programs were never effective.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has provided long-term statistics, however, that reveal a decrease of more than 15 percent in teens who have had sex from 1991 to 2013. In response to the president's proposal, Valerie Huber, president/CEO of Ascend—formerly known as the National Abstinence Education Association—told the *Christian Post* cutting the funding was “indefensible.”

“If you look at how the CDC and the public health community addresses risk behaviors, any risk behaviors—whether it's smoking or underage drinking or gang violence or a variety of other things—they always put an emphasis on giving the target audience, in this case, youth, the information and the skills to avoid that behavior,” she said. “The message is very clear. In order to achieve the best outcome, you don't smoke or don't engage in underage drinking ... the only risk behavior that they depart from that public health message is in the area of teen sex.”

The first abstinence-only funding occurred in 1981 under President Reagan. Since then, Congress has spent billions in support of the programs that are meant to curb teen pregnancy and prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among

young people.

The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States praised Obama for commitment “to secure the right to quality sexuality education for young people.” SIECUS has opposed abstinence-only programs in favor of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, which is proposed to receive a \$4 million increase in the president’s budget.

Some of that funding goes to Planned Parenthood.

According to a July 2015 survey conducted by the Barna Group, about 70 percent of Americans say students should learn how to avoid all the consequences of sex, rather than merely receive a pregnancy prevention message. In the much-maligned congressional omnibus spending bill passed late last year, one of the bright spots was an increase in appropriations for abstinence-only education programs—the very funding Obama intends to cut in his new budget proposal.