

Scott & White Healthcare Sex Education Program #1 in Texas

Scott & White Worth the Wait®

Response to Texas Freedom Network's "Just Say Don't Know" Report

A recent report "Just Say Don't Know" funded by the Texas Freedom Network (TFN) details the results of their "comprehensive study of sexual education in all of Texas' public school districts." Among the sex education programs reviewed was Scott & White Worth the Wait®(SWWTW®) developed by Scott & White Healthcare in Central Texas. Scott & White is a large multispecialty medical institution in Texas and the primary teaching hospital utilized by Texas A&M College of Medicine. We are pleased the report confirms the popularity and accuracy of SWWTW®, a medically based sex education program. The report notes that SWWTW® is the most commonly used sex education program utilized in 168 school districts (17%) in Texas. Many school districts trust the name of Scott & White, not only to provide outstanding healthcare, but also to provide the latest medical information, including sex education.

Sadly, the report is anything but "comprehensive." It appears the purpose of the report was to attack sex education programs in the state that focus on encouraging children from refraining from sexual activity. There was no attempt to bring those involved in sex education together to improve the health of our children. Even though it is the largest program in the state, SWWTW® was NEVER contacted for input. The "study" only addresses perceived deficiencies, and doesn't bother to report on the overwhelming positives of programs such as SWWTW®. Fortunately, the educated reader can see this bias which is confirmed by going to the TFN website. Incredibly, the mission of TNF is to "..... counter the religious right." To halt any false assumptions, Scott & White Healthcare is not a religious right organization, and neither is its sex ed program. In fact the founder and director of SWWTW® is not only a professor of Texas A&M College of Medicine and a practicing obstetrician / gynecologist, but also an internationally renowned contraceptive researcher. The flawed report does not bother to mention that SWWTW® has published positive results in one of the leading ob/gyn medical journals in the world. SWWTW® has also received state and national awards including the Heroes for Children Award from the Texas State Board of Education, Texas and National Bar Association awards, and the founder received the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist Community Service Award for her work with sex education. The report also fails to mention that SWWTW® has an outstanding contraceptive component that covers ALL the methods of birth control. Why did the authors leave all this information out of their report? Also, why did they leave out the fact that the teen pregnancy rate has declined in the state of Texas by 21% from 1991 to 2005.

While the SWWTW® curricula for 6th, 7th, 8th and high school students total over 900 pages of information, the report failed to document any misinformation whatsoever. The rare negative references to SWWTW® are false and medically inaccurate. For detail of the inaccurate statements in the report, see pages 3-6. We cannot comment on statements made regarding other sex education programs mentioned. But considering how the SWWTW® program was misrepresented, one can assume that other programs may also be victims. In fact, the report is rife with omissions on the true nature of sex education in the state of Texas.

TFN apparently has issues with the Texas Education Code which states that “abstinence from sexual activity always be presented as the preferred choice of behavior in relationships for unmarried persons of school age.” Who can argue with this mandate? What parent wants their child to have sex while in middle/high school? While SWWTW® has an excellent contraceptive component developed by a contraceptive researcher, we still believe that risk avoidance (not having sex) is the healthiest message. The report confirms that parents desire the message of risk avoidance as 94% of school districts in Texas incorporate abstinence sex education. It’s the parents and the school districts that must decide what information is presented to students in their schools. Not Scott & White, TNF, or other organizations.

We do concur with the recommendations made at the end of the report (page 47) as SWWTW® implements those very recommendations and feel they are mandatory aspects of any credible sex education program. Teachers implementing the SWWTW® curriculum undergo a one day training session by healthcare professionals which includes a factual up-to-date discussion of teen pregnancy, STDs, and contraception. (see www.worththewait.org/events) Our information is obtained from peer reviewed medical journals and national statistics. Our speakers that go into schools are healthcare professionals who have attended training sessions. And yes, we do believe sex education should extend beyond the approved health education textbooks, which unfortunately are not accurate or current, giving limited information for the student to make informed decisions.

The mission of SWWTW® is to educate adolescents and adults on the consequences of teen sexual activity including the medical, social, economic and legal impacts. A major focus is obviously dedicated to encouraging students from engaging in health risk behaviors. We concur with the CDC’s Healthy People 2010 goal of decreasing the number of students who engage in sexual intercourse.

In summary, SWWTW® is the most commonly used curriculum in Texas school districts, and a one of a kind sex education program with numerous unique aspects: 1) developed and implemented by a well respected major academic medical institution; 2) published results in leading medical journals; 3) teacher training seminars taught by healthcare professionals; 4) components for parents; 5) continuing medical education conferences for healthcare professionals and educators. Kids need all the facts to make informed, healthy decisions. Scott & White is dedicated to helping our schools and the entire community to lead healthy and happier lives.



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Scott & White Worth the Wait[®] Detailed Response to TFN Report

THEY SAID

In overview of programs

#1-Pg 8

Scott & White Worth the Wait – another popular commercial program that is the most widely used curriculum in Texas school districts – does include some of the basic components of sexuality education (such as brief sections on anatomy, puberty and menstrual cycles). Yet the curriculum discusses only the drawbacks and limitations of birth control while vaguely and briefly suggesting STD testing.²⁵ Missed is the opportunity to emphasize the role of routine STD screenings, as well as how to locate health care providers and what to expect when seeking services from these providers.

²⁵ "Worth the Wait: A Fear-Based Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Curriculum for High School Students." SIECUS. Retrieved December 22, 2008, from www.communityactionkit.org/reviews/WorthTheWait.html.

Condom information - #2-Pg 19

Exaggerating the condom failure rate is another common tactic used to denigrate the effectiveness of contraception. Students in Texas schools can be forgiven if they are confused about the true efficacy of condoms. Curriculum materials used in the classroom often perpetuate that confusion. When it comes to the failure rate of condoms in preventing pregnancy, look at the wide range of statistics given to students in Texas classrooms: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention⁵⁷ 2% - perfect use, 15% - typical use

Scott & White Worth the Wait⁵⁸ 15% Sex Respect⁵⁹ 10 – 20% Teens Are Saying kNOw(TASK)⁶⁰ 20 – 30% (for teens) Materials from Baird ISD⁶¹ 50% (over five years)

⁵⁸ SIECUS Review. Worth the Wait. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Retrieved January 6, 2009, from www.communityactionkit.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=p.age.viewpage&pageid=996.

Scott & White Worth the Wait[®] Facts

Contraception is discussed in detail in the High School curriculum. Information on the most common methods of birth control is provided and includes mechanism(s) of action, side effects/complications, and typical use rates as well as the level of protection from contracting an STD.

Starting in our 6th grade curriculum and throughout the 7th, 8th, and High School we clearly state "If you have had sex, you should see a healthcare professional. ...If you are unsure about where to go, your school nurse or counselor may be able to recommend where you can go or whom you can call to schedule a visit."

6th Grade: Page 4.12-20 & Page 4.14

7th Grade: 4.5-23

8th Grade: 5.4-20 & 6.22

HS: Page 6.16

If this indeed was a comprehensive study of sex education programs, why wouldn't the authors have referred directly to the curricula instead of relying on a third party's biased opinion?

The condom failure rate quoted is accurately reported. The report failed to point out that **we did not** exaggerate the rate. 15% is the published typical failure rate by the CDC and our medical reference Contraceptive Technology by authors Hatcher, Trussell, Nelson, Cates, Stewart, and Kowal.

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THEY SAID

“What Texas Students Learn & ‘Facts”

#3-Pg 23

Scott & White Worth the Wait curriculum (168 districts) tells students that pelvic inflammatory disease is “caused” by chlamydia and gonorrhea.⁹⁰ FACT: untreated chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to PID. The program gives students little information about testing for STDs, which could alert them to the need for treatment.

⁹⁰ SIECUS Review. Worth The Wait, Section 6-20.53. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Retrieved December 22, 2008, from www.communityactionkit.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=996.

Scott & White Worth the Wait® Facts

This statement is misquoted. Our curricula clearly and consistently states chlamydia and gonorrhea "can cause" pelvic inflammatory disease if left untreated as is quoted by the CDC. It is well known in the medical field that the most PID cases caused by infection are caused by either chlamydia and/or gonorrhea. Once again they failed to acknowledge our repetitive statements throughout all levels of the curricula that "if you have had sex, you should see a healthcare professional."

HS Page 5-15 "Many different organisms can cause PID, but most cases are the result of gonorrhea and chlamydial infections."

HS Gonorrhea Fact Sheet page 5-28

Consequences: "Can cause pelvic inflammatory disease in females (severe infection of uterus, tubes, ovaries) which can lead to infertility (can't get pregnant), tubal pregnancies, and chronic pelvic pain"

HS Chlamydia Fact Sheet page 5-29

Consequences: "Can cause pelvic inflammatory disease in females (severe infection of uterus, tubes, ovaries) which can lead to infertility (can't get pregnant), tubal pregnancies, and chronic pelvic pain"

HS Teacher Script slide 109: "Untreated gonorrhea in women can develop into pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)."

HS Teacher Script slide 127: "If untreated, chlamydia infection can progress to serious reproductive and other health problems with both short- and long-term consequences. Chlamydia can damage a woman's reproductive organs. It can cause a severe infection of the upper genital tract (uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries) called pelvic inflammatory disease."

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THEY SAID

Exaggerating Consequences of Sexual Behavior
#4-Pg 27

The state's most widely used vendor-produced curriculum, Scott & White Worth the Wait, which is used in 17 percent of Texas school districts, is fairly typical in warning students that premarital sexual activity leads to depression, suicide and divorce later in life.¹¹⁵

#5-Pg 28

"teenage sexual activity can create a multitude of medical, legal, and economic problems not only for individuals having sex but for society as a whole" still makes Worth the Wait rather tame in comparison to other materials.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ SIECUS Review. Worth the Wait: A Fear-Based Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Curriculum for High School Students. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. Retrieved December 22, 2008, from www.communityactionkit.org/reviews/WorthTheWait.html.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Virginity pledges

#6-Pg.32

Virginity pledges have become favorite activities of many abstinence-only providers and supporters. A number of programs used in Texas incorporate a virginity pledge, including WAIT Training,¹⁴⁶ Choosing the Best,¹⁴⁷ and Scott & White Worth the Wait¹⁴⁸ (the most widely used curriculum in the state). This activity, often conducted as a group function, is intended to guide teens towards an abstinent lifestyle until marriage. These pledges can also provide an additional mechanism to shame students who "break" their abstinence pledges.¹⁴⁸ Scott & White Worth the Wait. 8th Grade, 5th Edition, page 144.

#7 Reference #155, page 64 is another reference from SIECUS

Scott & White Worth the Wait® Facts

Our references for these factual statements are:
Depression & Suicide
Ad Health Wave II. Report of the Heritage Center for Data Analysis. Sexually active teenagers are more likely to be depressed and to attempt suicide. Robert E. Rector, Kirk Johnson, PhD, & Lauren R. Noyes June 3, 2003

Divorce

United States. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States. July 2002. 3 July 2003
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_022.pdf>.

The study fails to note that our curricula DOES NOT include this as a group activity and clearly states in the teacher directions "Tell them not to sign the cards in class but to take them home and think seriously about the commitment involved in signing the pledge card. These cards should be signed privately and not in class."

In carefully reading the report, reference 155 cannot be found in the text. Pg 32 ends with reference #151 & pg 33 starts with reference #162.

Scott & White Worth the Wait[®] Detailed Response to TFN Report

In Summary,

Negative statements made regarding Scott & White Worth the Wait[®] in the report funded by the Texas Freedom Network are false and maliciously misrepresent the true nature of our medically based sex education program. Scott & White Healthcare has not only developed the most commonly trusted sex education program in Texas, but is responsible for conducting adolescent sexual health seminars throughout the state and beyond to provide factual information to healthcare professionals, teachers, and other educators. Scott and White is a nonprofit organization and will continue to assist communities and schools with up-to-date, factual health education, including sex education.



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