

# State seeking information about teen abstinence programs

The state Department of Human Services is seeking information about teen education programs that emphasize abstinence from sexual activity.

The formal request, circulated by DHS's Adult and Family Services Division, seeks abstinence-only curricula that can be offered in addition to an existing program called Students Today Aren't Ready for Sex, or STARS.

STARS now is available to at least some sixth-graders in 31 of Oregon's 36 counties.

The 1999 Oregon Legislature set aside \$151,000 from the STARS budget and asked state officials to find out about other abstinence-only programs as alternatives or to supplement STARS, which has received positive evaluations. Officials say other programs might allow communities to supplement STARS by reaching different age groups or delivering programs

through organizations other than schools, for example.

"We intend to find out what other programs are available so that local communities will have a broader choice of abstinence programs to offer as part of comprehensive efforts to prevent teen pregnancies," said Sandie Hoback, AFS administrator. Information about other programs is sought by Oct. 8.

Proposals will be evaluated by a broad-based group that includes DHS, state Commission on Children and Families, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Center for Family Policy, county health departments and others.

Hoback said programs are being asked to describe such things as the age group being targeted, how social and media pressures are addressed, research and evaluation results, and how programs meet federal requirements and state guidelines.

Oregon has 10 guidelines for such programs including teaching accurate medical and scientific information; promoting the healthy benefits of abstinence (rather than shame and fear); helping youth develop decision-making skills; respecting cultural, ethnic, and religious differences; and having community and professional support.

Hoback said the legislative Emergency Board, which meets between biennial sessions, will be asked in December to release the \$151,000 in state funds for such programs, which presumably would be supported by federal and other funds as well.

The first such programs might be introduced by early 2000, she said, and could be offered through schools, boys and girls clubs, churches or other local sponsors.

Organizations wishing to know more may call Larry Shadbolt at (503) 945-6072.

# USDA waivers would ease complex food-stamp reporting.

It may soon become easier for low-income people to obtain food stamp benefits in Oregon.

The federal government has taken the first step in granting the Oregon Department of Human Services waivers to federal Food Stamp Program rules that will reduce complex reporting requirements.

"Food stamps are a very important transitional program and we want people to be able to use the program," said Jim Neely, deputy administrator of DHS's Adult and Family Services Division, which operates the program. "This is the first step in moving food stamps in the direction we believe the program should go."

Under the waivers, reflecting some recommendations made at DHS public forums in May, federal officials gave conditional approval to:

Disregard the value of a household's first vehicle for eligibility purposes, replacing the federal standard of limiting value to \$4,650 before counting value as a household asset.

Allow a standard shelter allowance, part of the computation for determining food-stamp eligibility, to reduce the need for documentation of actual shelter costs. Allow a standard monthly medical allowance for seniors and people with disabilities, also an eligibility criterion, simplifying the program by decreasing reporting and verification require-

ments. More than 106,000 Oregon households receive food stamp benefits, now delivered electronically, averaging \$147 per household.

Eligibility for the program, predominantly financed by the federal government, is determined based on a combination of income, assets and family size.

Federal officials estimated the cost of the changes at \$66.5 million over the next five years, and Neely said Oregon was asked to illustrate how these costs can be offset. He said one option would be to disregard the value of the first ve-

hicle for households that agreed to participate in employment and training activities, which presumably would reduce the need for food stamps.

The old rules sometimes forced people to choose between food stamps and a reliable car to get to work as well as imposing onerous reporting requirements that required some people to take time off work, Neely said.

If state and federal food-stamp officials reach agreement, he said, it is possible the new rules could be implemented by late this year or early next.

# Conyers Criticizes GOP For Failure To Act On Police Misconduct

Attending a meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus on the subject of police brutality Rep. John Conyers, Jr. chastised the Republican controlled Congress for failing to act on the growing epidemic of police brutality.

Conyers added "...Police misconduct is a manifest issue...The energies of Congress should be focused on the adoption of legislative priorities that address the substance of law enforcement management and strengthen the current battery of tools available to sanction misconduct."

Police misconduct is growing dramatically. For example: Last December in Pittsburgh, a police officer shot to death a black motorist who had slowed down and peered through his side window while observing a drug arrest. In Riverside, California, a policeman in her car at a gas station who had been called to come to her aid shot Taisha Miller—a 19-year-old black woman—to death. In February, Amadou Diallo, a West African immigrant, was shot 41 times in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment by four police officers.

In response to the problem of police misconduct, Conyers will be gathering data and mustering support at the meeting in support of two new bills, which he has introduced in Congress.

The first bill, titled the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act of 1999, and adopts an innovative approach to the dilemma of police misconduct. Rather than focusing on episodic incidents, this legislation targets hiring and management protocols much farther up the chain of causation that can stop incidents of misconduct long before they occur. The bill also strengthens federal prosecutorial tools with demonstrated effectiveness at sanctioning misconduct. This bill seizes upon the opportunity to initiate reforms that would restore public and accountability to law enforcement.

H.R. 2656, introduced by Congressman Conyers would initiate the reforms necessary to restore public trust and accountability to law enforcement.

The other bill which Conyers will be gathering support for is commonly known as the "Driving while Black" bill. The bill, H.R. 1443, is an attempt to address the problem of racial profiling by police and is officially titled "The Traffic Stops Statistics Study Act of 1999." It would require the Justice Department to conduct a nationwide study of racial profiling by acquiring data from law enforcement agencies regarding the characteristics of persons stopped for alleged traffic violations and the rationale for subsequent searches.

In support of H.R. 1443, which has received the endorsement of the White House as well as forty-six other Representative, Conyers has



3 year old Carl Conyers (youngest son of Congressman John Conyers, Jr.)  
Place: Dexter, Michigan, Family-Recreational Campsite

programs designed to get officers on the street. Now, lawmakers must be just as willing to support programs designed to train and manage them after they get there. If the Republicans won't act on these issues now, they will face the consequences next November.

said that the "legislation will allow us to ascertain the extent such profiling is occurring on a nationwide basis, help increase police awareness of the problem, and determine if any border response is warranted. If our citizens are to trust our justice system it is imperative that all forms of discrimination be eliminated from law enforcement. The Traffic Stops Statistics Act of 1999 will help give Congress the tools to assess and understand a dangerous form of such discrimination — racial profiling in traffic stops. I welcome the President's support for this initiative and look forward to working with him to see that it is signed into law."

Conyers concluded "Congress has been enthusiastic about supporting

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**It just hit. Without warning,** the winds raged through nearby cities and towns that morning last spring, toppling trees, tearing off roofs, ripping down power lines.

And the 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift had started out so normally for Irene Bowen and Birgit Schulz, two customer service employees at Pacific Power's Customer Service Center. They had taken the usual number of calls, answering questions about things like new service, payment arrangements and energy efficiency.

Around noon, the storm struck and suddenly the phones lit up like a video game. For the next 12 hours, Irene, Birgit and their fellow customer service professionals logged every customer call so that line crews could be dispatched quickly. They updated callers on the progress, checking the status of work for them. They also gave advice about what to do until the power was back on.

As the power was restored, the crisis subsided. Many of the Customer Service Center's employees had been at their workstations for 17 hours. And the

## There was no call before the storm.

day's volume at the Customer Service Center had reached a near-record breaking 12,000 calls, with more than 94 percent of them answered within 45 seconds. Irene and Birgit alone had handled an amazing 300 calls each!

But they weren't counting. "These aren't just calls, they are people who need help and I'm concerned about them. So I just stayed on the line and kept going!" said Birgit.

Irene Bowen, Birgit Schulz and the team at the Customer Service Center. Real troupers. In and out of a storm.

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