



# AMERICAN ATHEISTS

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November 9, 2015

*Via Email*

Dr. Michael Tefs  
Superintendent  
Wooster City School District  
144 North Market St.  
Wooster, OH 44691

Dr. Tefs,

American Atheists Legal Center received a complaint from the parent of a Wooster High School 8<sup>th</sup> grader concerning the lecture by a representative from the Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County made during the student's Family and Consumer Science class on or about October 28, 2015.

According to what American Atheists has been told, the pregnancy center representative made several statements that confused the student, so the student shared them with their parent. The statements made by the representative that confused the student were as follows:

1. If a girl gets pregnant because of rape or incest, her only option is adoption of the baby.
2. Marriage prevents sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
3. Students shouldn't have children until they are married.

The parent told American Atheists that she contacted Wooster High School on or about October 30, 2015, and spoke with Associate Principal Andrew Bratcher to complain about not being informed ahead of time about the pregnancy center representative speaking to the class. The parent was informed by Mr. Bratcher that this was an annual event for the class.

The parent called the school again on November 3, 2015, this time speaking to Associate Principal Nolan Wickard about the factually inaccurate information given to the students and asking if a health care provider or representative from the Wooster Health Center, a Planned Parenthood clinic, could address the class about STD prevention and alternatives to unwanted pregnancy. The parent had already contacted both a nurse and the clinic to ensure their availability. Mr. Wickard refused, telling the parent such information would not be presented to the students.

The American Atheists Legal Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to the separation of religion and government and protecting the rights of atheists. American Atheists has affiliate groups and hundreds of members in Ohio.

The first statement that the pregnancy center representative is said to have made about adoption being the only option for any unwanted pregnancy—whatever the circumstances—is wrong. Emergency contraception is legally available, and health care providers are legally required to inform sexual assault

victims about their right to emergency contraception according to Ohio law.<sup>1</sup> Abortion, too, is a legal option for every person in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Whether the Wooster City School District teachers, principals, or school board approve of emergency contraception or abortion should have no bearing on providing factual information to students about reproductive health and choices, especially when discussing sexual assault.

The second statement that the pregnancy center representative is said to have made—that marriage prevents STDs—is also false. There is no mention of “marriage” on the STD prevention webpages of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>3</sup> or the Mayo Clinic.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, the pregnancy center representative is said to have told students that they shouldn’t have children until they are married. Regardless of the Wooster City School District’s or pregnancy center representative’s beliefs on having children out of wedlock, perhaps it would have been better to educate the students about methods of preventing pregnancy because according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in 2011 Ohio ranked 23rd in teenage pregnancies in the country.<sup>5</sup>

The Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County is a faith-based facility according to its website.<sup>6</sup> Following its religious principles, the center does not offer any information on its website about emergency contraception or abortion options. The center does not provide STD testing or information about STD prevention. The center does advocate for adoption as the solution for all unwanted pregnancies and for abstinence-only education, and campaigns about post-abortion guilt. These last three are religious-based programs.

The Wooster City School District’s Bylaws & Policies forbids instructional activities that “advance ... any particular religion or religion generally.”<sup>7</sup> The statements attributed to the pregnancy center representative relate to religious values about marriage protecting against STDs, about when to have children, and about adoption as the only option for an unwanted pregnancy. Certainly, the program presented by this pregnancy center representative furthers religious beliefs about reproductive health care—not legal and medically accurate information about reproductive health care.

To that point, the school district’s policy and bylaws also state that one of its educational outcome goals is to ensure that every student acquires “a body of basic information concerning the principles of the physical, biological, and social sciences[.]”<sup>8</sup> The statements attributed to the pregnancy center

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<sup>1</sup> ORC Ann. 2907.29.

<sup>2</sup> *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, (U.S. 1973); *Planned Parenthood Asso. v. Cincinnati*, 635 F. Supp. 469, 1986 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 29060 (S.D. Ohio 1986).

<sup>3</sup> “Prevention: How You Can Prevent Sexually Transmitted Diseases”; <http://cdc.gov/std/prevention/default.htm>; last visited November 6, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> “Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs): Prevention”; <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sexually-transmitted-diseases-stds/basics/definition/con-20034128>; last visited November 6, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> *Ohio Adolescent Reproductive Health Facts*; U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services; Nov. 14, 2014; <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/states/oh.html>

<sup>6</sup> “Creating Options” & “Men of Honor Curriculum”, Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County; <http://www.pccwayneoh.org/about-us.html>; last visited November 6, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> “2270 Religion in the School”; Wooster City School District Bylaws & Policies; <http://www.neola.com/woostercity-oh/>; last visited November 6, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> “2131 Educational Outcome Goals”; Wooster City School District Bylaws & Policies; <http://www.neola.com/woostercity-oh/>; last visited November 6, 2015.

representative provided the students with false information and incomplete information about STD prevention and sexual assault resources. Providing faith-based teachings that are scientifically and legally inaccurate about reproductive health care does not fulfill the education goal of providing students with “basic information about physical, biological, and social sciences.”

American Atheists Legal Center, the parent, and the student demand that the school provide an equal amount of time before the end of 2015 in all classes that were instructed by representatives from the Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County to a non-faith-based health care provider to provide the students with factually accurate and evidence-based information about STD prevention, pregnancy prevention, and all the legal means of preventing or ending an unwanted pregnancy. The school district introduced the topic; it is the school district’s responsibility to ensure students receive accurate information.

Additionally, we demand that the school district cease allowing Pregnancy Care Center of Wayne County to present to students as part of any official school class or program because of the inaccurate and religiously motivated curriculum that is being presented to students.

We kindly expect a reply to this letter within five business days.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Knief". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Knief  
Legal & Public Policy Director  
American Atheists Legal Center  
aknief@atheists.org