

GAO critical of Bush's global AIDS plan

April 5 2006

The Government Accountability Office is criticizing U.S. President George Bush's AIDS plan for causing confusion and eroding prevention efforts in some nations.

At issue is the requirement that a large part of Bush's global AIDS plan be earmarked to promote abstinence and fidelity, The Washington Post reported Wednesday. The GAO says that is causing confusion in many countries and, in a few, eroding other prevention efforts, including ones to reduce mother-to-child transmission of the virus.

The GAO's 87-page report focused on the most controversial aspect of the \$15 billion, 5-year AIDS plan.

Although there's widespread support for the strategy of encouraging abstinence until marriage, being faithful thereafter and using condoms in high-risk sexual encounters, the GAO also found program managers are struggling to craft comprehensive prevention messages while simultaneously keeping account of spending on the abstinence effort, the Post said.

The president's plan requires at least 20 percent of AIDS spending go for prevention. Half of the prevention budget must be spent to stop sexual transmission of HIV and two-thirds of that spending must be used to promote abstinence and fidelity.

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Citation: GAO critical of Bush's global AIDS plan (2006, April 5) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-04-gao-critical-bush-global-aids.html>

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