

# NATION

## Federal AIDS training decried

### Lawmakers told of coarse courses

By Rowan Scarborough  
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People who attended mandatory federal AIDS awareness training told a House panel yesterday that instructors veered into inappropriate talk about sexual practices, broaching such subjects as sex toys, flavored condoms and an oral sex survey.

Family-values researchers and lawmakers said federal workers have complained to them about AIDS lecturers who used models of erect penises to demonstrate condom use. They said some workers received brochures that promote seminars on "wet and wild" lesbian sex.

Lyn Mickley, a 13-year employee at the National Institutes of Health, told the Government Reform and Oversight subcommittee on civil service she was offended when an AIDS trainer from the Whitman-Walker Clinic made crude jokes and seemed fixated on sex.

"We were lectured on the use of condoms — what kind to buy, the colors they come in, proper storage and the use of spermicides," Mrs. Mickley testified. "Throughout the lecture, I kept wondering 'What does this have to do with the workplace?' In fact, it seemed to be more a class in sex education, rather than a seminar to educate federal employees about the challenges posed by the HIV-AIDS epidemic."

She said her instructor suggested an oral-sex survey to determine the risks of contracting HIV,



Republican presidential hopeful Robert K. Dornan offers his views at House hearings yesterday on the Clinton administration's AIDS training program, which was criticized for repeated references to condoms and sex toys.

the virus that causes AIDS.

"Hoping to get a laugh from the audience, she suggested a sign-up sheet at the back of the room for those who wanted to participate in such a study," Mrs. Mickley testified.

But AIDS advocates and officials in the Clinton administration, which started the mandated training in 1993, said such abuses, if they occurred at all, were rare.

"It has been suggested that these trainings involved extended discussions on various bizarre sexual practices and is an assault on religion and traditional family values. Nothing could be further from the truth," said Ken Goodman, who directs the Whitman-Walker Training Institute, the largest provider of AIDS training to the federal government.

"How has this training been received by the work force? In a single word: enthusiastically," he said.

Conservative activists, however, said they have received scores of complaints and suggested there are additional workers who do not

like the program but remain silent for fear of reprisal.

Thomas Herron, a civilian Navy employee, said his supervisor threatened to fire him in January when he refused to attend the training after reviewing the brochures. Mr. Herron said he found the language "a put-down of premarital chastity."

Trudy Hutchens, a researcher at the conservative group Concerned Women for America, said President Clinton's 1993 AIDS training directive "became a vehicle for activists to push acceptance of homosexuality on each and every federal worker."

Ms. Hutchens said she attended a session at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. conducted by an American Red Cross instructor.

"What I experienced in that class was in line with everything federal workers had reported to me," she said. "... The entire two-hour class was littered with the instructor's off-color jokes ranging from anything from condoms to bizarre lubricants. I fail to see how these discussions are crucial

to the federal workplace."

Stephen Michael, a member of the AIDS activist group ACT UP, in an interview blasted the administration for designing what he considers a flawed program.

He said seminars should have focused on preventing workplace discrimination against AIDS victims and on "universal prevention" techniques for people in the medical and law enforcement fields.

"If you are targeting federal government employees in Topeka, Kansas, you're not going to act as if you're talking to gay men at a bar in Manhattan," Mr. Michael said. "You don't go on about sex itself when you are talking about AIDS in the workplace. ... This training was absolutely worthless."

Rep. John Mica, Florida Republican and subcommittee chairman, will likely draft legislation later this summer placing restrictions on federal AIDS trainers.

He said yesterday he spent the previous evening reading pamphlets handed out by instructors.