



Teaching Sexual Health to Students with Disabilities

Hello!

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TRIAD: *Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders*



FOR FAMILIES



**FOR EDUCATORS AND
SERVICE PROVIDERS**



**FOR COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS**



FOR SELF ADVOCATES



Why Teach about Sexual Health?



Tennessee Health Education and Lifetime Wellness Standards:

- ▶ Explain basic structures and functions
- ▶ Recognize abstinence as a positive choice
- ▶ Identify potential outcomes of engaging in sexual activity
- ▶ Research skills necessary for maintaining reproductive health
- ▶ Create short and long term life plans



Tennessee Gateway Law

- ▶ Focus on promoting sexual risk avoidance through abstinence
- ▶ Provide age-appropriate sex education K-12
- ▶ Encourage sexual health
- ▶ Teach skills needed to make healthy decisions
- ▶ Provide factually and medically accurate information
- ▶ Encourage students to talk to parents or other trusted adult about sex or other risk behaviors
- ▶ Educate students on consent, puberty, pregnancy, childbirth and sexually transmitted diseases

Safety Considerations

- ▶ The US Justice Department found that people with intellectual disabilities- women and men- are the victims of sexual assaults at rates more than seven times those for people without disabilities.
- ▶ People with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know.



Joint Position Statement of AAIDD, The Arc and TASH

People with disabilities, like all people, have inherent sexual rights. These rights and needs must be affirmed, defended, and respected.

Implications



- ▶ Students with disabilities may need explicit instruction
- ▶ Schools should collaborate with parents to determine needs and support learning
- ▶ IEP teams should consider student needs in sexual health topics
- ▶ Special education teachers should collaborate with school staff

Challenges and Strategies around teaching sex education to SWD



Challenges

- ▶ Not addressed on many IEPs
- ▶ Content in general education not enough
- ▶ Sex is often a taboo topic with families and school personnel
- ▶ Families resistant due to personal, cultural or religious factors
- ▶ Difficult to locate resources

Strategies

- ▶ List as an independent living IEP goal
- ▶ Start the conversation as early as possible
- ▶ Understand and respect family beliefs
- ▶ Prioritize safety and self-determination needs for the student
- ▶ Identify resources already in school



What Topics Should be Covered?



Topics to Teach

- ▶ Anatomy
- ▶ Puberty
- ▶ Hygiene
- ▶ Self-care
- ▶ Reproductive process
- ▶ Sexual activity
- ▶ Sexually transmitted infections
- ▶ Contraception and protected sex
- ▶ Consent
- ▶ Different types of relationships

Start at a Basic Level

Anatomy
and
Gender



Puberty
and
Changes



Public versus
Private

Teaching Consent

- ▶ What is consent?
- ▶ How to you ask for consent?
- ▶ How do you give consent?
- ▶ How can you NOT give consent?
- ▶ What can you do in an uncomfortable situation?



How Should Information be Presented?



▶ Best Practices for Presenting Sex Education Topics

- ▶ Be concrete
- ▶ Use multiple modalities
- ▶ Repeat when needed



Suggested Resources?



Online Resources

Healthy Bodies Toolkit	https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/HealthyBodies/
ATN/AIR-P Puberty and Adolescence Resource	https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit/atnair-p-puberty-and-adolescence-resource
National Council on Independent Living Sex Education for Individuals with I/DD	https://ncil.org/sex-ed-for-individuals-with-i-dd/
Sexuality across the Lifespan for Children and Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities (<i>English and Spanish</i>)	https://www.fddc.org/sites/default/files/file/publications/Sexuality%20Guide-Parents-English.pdf

Print Resources

- ▶ *Making Sense of Sex: A Forthright Guide to Puberty, Sex and Relationships for People with Asperger's Syndrome.* By Tony Attwood, 2008.
- ▶ *Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health: A Curriculum for Teaching Adolescents / Adults with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Social Challenges.* By Catherine Davies and Melissa Dubie, 2011.
- ▶ *Sexuality and Relationships Education for Children and Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders.* By Davida Hartman, 2013.

▶ Coming Soon!

TRIAD is developing an online toolkit and printable materials for autistic teens and adults that cover:

- ▶ Puberty
- ▶ Sexuality
- ▶ Sex

Look for these this summer- Follow TRIAD on
Facebook

THANKS!

Any questions?

You can also find us at:

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