

How Particular Disabilities Affect Sexuality and Sexuality Education

The development of sexuality takes place in all youngsters. Whether your child or adolescent has a chronic illness, sensory, orthopedic, mental, emotional or learning disability, he or she has a genuine need for accurate information about sexuality, as well as the need to accept sexuality as a part of his or her identity.

The type of disability that a child has however, may affect the way in which information should be presented. The disability may also affect what type of information is presented. For example:

A young person with a physical disability may need specific information about how the physical disability affects expression of sexuality and participation in a sexual relationship.

A young person with a visual impairment would be capable of understanding a wide range of concepts and facts about sexuality but may need materials presenting this information through touch or hearing, or through Braille or large print materials.

A person with developmental delays may need information presented in small amounts and in simple, concrete and basic terms. This person may also need the family and caregivers to stress the distinctions between public and private behavior, as well as how to identify who is a stranger and who is a friend.

Tailoring the pace and presentation of information to the needs of each young person is very important. To do so effectively, parents and professionals should take into consideration:

How the child's particular disability may affect his or her social-sexual development;

How the disability affects the child's ability to learn information about sexual issues.

What extra information may need to be provided to address any specific characteristics of a particular disability?

Fortunately, there is a variety of information available in regards to sexuality education for individuals with particular disabilities.

For a list of resources and assistance contact Special Medical Services, NH Department of Health and Human Services, 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301

(603) 271-4525 or 1-800-852-3345 ext. 4525