



# Communicating with Families of Individuals regarding sexual policy

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# PROBLEMS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Being first *introduced* that there is a problem
- 2. What is 'sex'
  - Can I see my son or daughter as 'sexual'?
  - Am I okay with them being 'sexual'?
- 3. Defining and teaching *boundaries*
- 4. Individual's rights – can thing be restricted?
  - Competency and the rights of an Individual
- 5. (Realistic) Policy Making –
- 6. Resources – Material and People

# WHO IS THE INDIVIDUAL?

## The marriage of Tommy and Jamie

- Tommy has Down Syndrome and Autism
- Jamie has a measured IQ of 55 (with clear verbal language)
- Tommy and Jamie are in love and want to get married
- Tommy and Jamie's families
- Concerns



# SOME TIMES PROBLEMS ARISE WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

- More common causes for law enforcement seem to include use of the internet and some boundary related issues.
- For some, changes in routines or staffing can lead to aggressive behaviors
- Many, not all, problems can be anticipated to proactive education can often help.
- Case examples

# WHEN (IF) TO TEACH HUMAN SEXUALITY

- My child has autism, so sexuality is not a concern
- The story of Jimmy
- Jimmy is a 13 year old boy with autism and verbal language but has limited executive functioning abilities, poor social judgement and desperately wants to be like everyone else
- Two summer vacations ... “Now I know what sex is”

# WHEN (IF) TO TEACH HUMAN SEXUALITY

- Bill and Alexis
- Bill is 17 years old and baby sits Alexis, his 14 year old younger sister
- Alexis was diagnosed early in life with Autism and has received a lot of treatment and language therapy
- Alexis writes an English paper entitled, "How do I tell my parents I'm having sex with my brother"
- Reality was somewhat different than one initially thought, but...
- Although Bill was identified as having a higher functioning form of autism, the legal system did not understand autism



# THE NEED TO PROACTIVELY TEACH HUMAN SEXUALITY

- Should Individuals with Developmental Disabilities be taught about Human Sexuality?
- If so, what should be taught and who should teach it?
- If so, at what age should the individual be taught Human Sexuality and is it taught once?
- If so, is it taught with words, with video's or with what type of materials?

# THE NEED TO PROACTIVELY TEACH HUMAN SEXUALITY

- What is taught in Human Sexuality lessons?
- Should the family be consulted?
- Should the family be shown the materials – given the materials, be present during the teaching sessions?
- Do family and religious values play a role in what the individual is taught/exposed to? Should they be?



# WHAT (COULD BE) IS TAUGHT?

- The human body
- Pregnancy and birth
- Definition of terms including slang
- Things you might come across
- Relationships – including how relationships occur and develop
- Informed Consent

The background is a solid teal color with a subtle gradient. In the four corners, there are decorative white line-art elements resembling circuit traces or neural network connections, with small circles at the end of the lines.

# WHAT DOES '*INFORMED CONSENT*' MEAN?

# BOUNDARIES

The image features a dark blue gradient background. The word "BOUNDARIES" is centered in a white, bold, sans-serif font. In the four corners, there are decorative white line-art elements that resemble circuit traces or network diagrams, with lines connecting to small circles.



# WHY SHOULD BOUNDARIES BE TAUGHT

- Meeting the bride
- Concretely understanding the rules to new settings
- Sheldon and the Library

# WHAT IS A BOUNDARY?

- The emotional and physical space between you and another
- Where you end and another begins
- Balanced emotional and physical limits defining and guiding interactions with others
- Limits we set in relationships that allow us to protect ourselves.

# WHY ARE BOUNDARIES IMPORTANT?

- Maintain safety of self and others
- Encourages balance within one's life
- Models healthy balance for others
- Provides definition to both work and home life
- Lessens risk for burn out
- Can you say 'no'?



# ONGOING EDUCATION

- We typically learn from experience
- As a result we sometimes need to
- Individuals can often benefit from ongoing education or help to learn from one experience to the next – this helps with issues of informed consent.
- What other types of ongoing education are there?
- ... when the counselor switches places with consumer to plan an outing

# AGENCY REGULATIONS VERSUS AN INDIVIDUALS WANTS AND DESIRES (RIGHTS)?

- What does your agency's policies actually say?
- Have the policies been legally vetted?
  - The case of the woman (who was considered competent) who wanted to keep and watch her video's in her room – the agency objected and refused to allow it
- Is your staff educated on agency policy and do they understand it? How can you be sure?

# AGENCY REGULATIONS VERSUS AN INDIVIDUALS WANTS AND DESIRES (RIGHTS)?

- Individual's rights versus protection of community (other individuals and minors).
- What can and can not occur on agency property?
- What are your responsibilities as an agency and how do you know that you have everything covered?
- Can an individual be a good self-advocate and if not good enough, will you help them get the supports they might need?



# SUPPORT BETWEEN AGENCIES

- Routine regular meetings between agencies
- Sharing resources –
  - In-service providers
  - Materials
  - Speakers Isabelle Henault, David Hingsburger
  - Safer Options or current equivalent AND previously trained providers from Safer Options

# SUMMARY

- Individuals with developmental disabilities are usually interested in all aspects of life including interpersonal relationships and including issues which include human sexuality.
- Proactive responses to issues of human sexuality may be prudent
- Human sexuality education, policies and informed information is good practice/good business
- Good informed policy and practices vetted by good legal council is essential
- Not everything can be anticipated, a good policy with well trained personnel should lead to informed problem solving.