



Working with Youth with I/DD

Sexual Violence Prevention in Schools

Strategies

BEFORE

Learn Who Will Be Present. Ask about youth who may have I/DD. Get the contact info for their support people if appropriate - Special Educators, Ed Techs, Interpreters, etc.

Ask Questions of Support People.

- What might the student(s) need?
 - What does support look like for them?
 - What will the classroom environment include?
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Make the Case for Inclusion. Provide information on how youth with I/DD are disproportionately targeted for sexual violence, that their inclusion matters, and that they need this information to be empowered and safe.

Co-Create an Accessibility Plan. Collaborate with staff on a plan that utilizes shared resources for accessibility. Consider an MOU that includes a joint commitment to inclusion and a running list of things you can offer to schools with advance planning such as space needs, interpretation, specific materials, etc.

Give Text Space. Ensure that any written materials have ample space around the text and increase font size. Prepare physical copies in **black and white**.

Gather Visual Materials. Pair text with icons to enhance meaning. Include relevant pictures and video.

DURING

Speak Directly to Youth. Ask youth questions about themselves (Where do you go for information? How do you prefer to work or play with others? What do you already know?) rather than asking staff to answer for them. Model and encourage speaking directly to students, *not about them*.

Concrete & Repeat. Use concrete language and direct examples (as opposed to oversimplifying). Apply everyday words to real life examples. For example, “You know how kids will sometimes grab the hood of someone’s sweatshirt? Permission to touch someone means clothing too.”

Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Define. Provide definitions, state underlying assumptions, acknowledge slang and that there are many ways to talk about things for example, “Some people may use the term ‘hanging out’ or ‘talking’ to mean being close and interested in one another.”

Slow It Down. Allow time for preparing, previewing, and processing. For example, “In the next slides I’m going to ask a couple of questions.”

Break It Up. Break up the content into smaller chunks. Schedule frequent breaks. Regularly ask if a break is needed.

Normalize Adaptive Communications. Empower youth to express their thinking through communications cards or boards, art, gestures, or movement. Invite ALL students, not just those with an I/DD, to try diverse forms of communicating.

Check for Understanding. Review material from the last lesson. Ask questions, invite a teach back, practice skills.

Foster Connection. Provide opportunities for youth to work together with one another across abilities rather than only being paired with support staff.

Practice Flexibility. Let youth and their needs guide the direction even if it shifts plans.

AFTER

Follow Up. Customize evaluation methods for individual needs.

Encourage Integration. Provide staff with easy ways to integrate core concepts and skills into future learning and experiences of school. For example, share an activity that they can use in their SEL or social studies curricula or encourage staff to model consent around touching assistive mobility devices.

Strategies Developed from these Resources & Recommended Resources

[Advocates For Youth](#)

[Disabilty Rights Maine](#)

[Elevatus](#) - online resources and trainings for professionals, parents, and educators

“Guide for Health Educators: Teaching Sexual Health Education to Students with Special Needs” produced by [Maine Family Planning](#) (*by request*)

[Mad Hatter Wellness](#) - online resources and trainings for professionals, parents, and educators.

[Openlowa](#) -online resources including Parent’s Guide

[Speaking Up For Us](#) - run by and for adults who identify as self-advocates.

[Teaching Sexual Health to Differing Abilities](#)

[Teaching Sexual Health to Youth with Physical Disabilities](#)

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