SOCIAL/SEXUAL CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE/SEVERE DISABILITIES

Special Services Department, June 19, 2013

Safety Issues

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- American Academy of Pediatrics
  - Children with disabilities are sexually abused at a rate that is between 2-10 times higher than for children without disabilities
  - 68-83% of women with developmental disabilities will be sexually assaulted
  - For people with SCI ("spinal cord injury"), abuse disguised as pressure sores, trauma to the skin, broken bones
- Factors influencing these statistics
  - Less able to defend themselves
  - Often not alert to potentially dangerous situations
  - Do not know to report abuse
  - Seek approval and affection
  - May be exposed to a large number of caregivers for intimate care
  - Taught to be compliant to authority

Developmentally Appropriate Sexuality Education Content

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- Sexuality Education for children with disabilities requires some degree of individualization
  - IEP used as an instrument for adapting sexuality curriculum
  - If human sexuality education is written into the IEP, it is more likely to be designed and delivered around the unique needs of the student
  - General strategy
    - adapt the pace and presentation of information to the child's particular needs
    - Knowledge of how a particular disability affects development, learning and sexual expression important in adapting curriculum

Developmentally Appropriate Sexuality Education Content

- American Academy of Pediatrics & NICHCY suggests the following topics for children ages 12-18:
  - Health care, health promoting behaviors such as regular check-ups, breast and testicular self-exam
  - Sexuality as part of the total self
  - Communication, dating, love, intimacy (Qualities of good relationships such as friendship, love, communication, respect, decision making, and knowing there are consequences
  - Importance of values in guiding ones behavior
  - How alcohol and drug use influence decision making
  - Sexual intercourse and other ways to express sexuality
  - Birth control and responsibilities of child-bearing
  - Reproduction and pregnancy
  - Condoms and disease prevention
  - Discussing issues of abuse (signs, prevention, what to do if it is suspected)
  - Healthy diet, body weight, good grooming, exercise

Task Force Formation and the Search for Materials

At the request of Special Services Director David Poeschl, a Task Force was formed at SLHS, consisting of M/S SDC teachers Lucia Fatone and Carmen Watson, School Psychologist Doreet Stein, Speech-Language Specialist Carol Delton, and former Program Specialist Jasmine Zartman. Parents were also invited, and a parent attended one of the full discussions of possible materials.

The search for materials conducted by several of the Task Force members, included:

-Contacting districts around the area, resulting in the finding that no one had a particular curriculum to recommend

-Searching the internet for recommendations, and contacting professionals who had used or authored curricula to address this subject matter

-Ordering materials for evaluation from publishers specializing in curricula for students with disabilities

Task Force Meetings and SLHS Leadership Team Recommendation

Over the course of four meetings, the Task Force reviewed six different curricula, and ultimately recommended one of them ("The Circles Curriculum") plus some supplementary materials.

Circles Curriculum cost is: $1,999 (one copy has already been purchased, one additional will be needed).

On 1/14/2013, the SLHS Leadership Team unanimously approved the recommendation from the Special Education Task Force

Moving forward, we note that we are requesting adoption of teaching tools and not a new course and that, for the more explicit materials, teachers would follow district permission procedures in place for sex ed similar to those used in the general education classes

The Materials: **Teaching Tools Recommended:**

- The **Circles Curriculum** (published by Stanfield; 7 boxes sets of 2 to 3 DVDs per topic and 4 curriculum guides; the curriculum also comes with some classroom materials.) This is the only curriculum we found with videos. They are somewhat dated (published between 1986 and 2006) but provide a gentle approach that is broadly appropriate for our SH students. The Circles approach uses a large, colorful visual approach to help students conceptualize and categorize their various relationships and the behaviors appropriate within each.
- Our only concern we had was that none of the Circles materials addressed same-sex relationships and called the publisher who confirmed that all depicted relationships are heterosexual and commented that teachers may supplement the material. The publisher (Stanfield) also typically provides updated products at a reduced price, in case some section of Circles is updated.
- Despite its limitations, the group reached consensus that Circles is the best overall program we have seen for our population, and we recommend purchasing it. ***Note: in order for us to review these materials, our district was required to purchase them on approval. No further funds will be expended on these materials unless and until there are updates available.***

Supplementary Materials Recommended

- **Learn About Life** (Published by Attainments): spiral bound teacher's edition plus laminated folders with realistic illustrations for students who need more explicit and direct teaching in order to prepare them for independent living. ***If we adopt the curriculum, we would recommend purchasing 4 to 6 additional sets of laminated folders at a cost of under $200.00 to the district.***
- **McLaughlin curriculum:** one chapter available on-line ("From Friend to Sweetheart") that is inclusive of same sex relationships depicted in photographs, to meet District standards on inclusivity. ***No further cost to district, unless more of this curriculum is recommended.***
- **Just for the Health of It** reproducible worksheets (written by Patricia Rizzo Toner; published by Health Curriculum Activities Library), 5 books, each dealing with a particular topic, such as Nutrition, Substance Abuse prevention, and Sexuality. ***No further cost to district.***