



PART 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multnomah County Health Department’s (MCHD) Youth Sexual Health Equity Program (YSHEP) works with schools and community partners to provide age appropriate and culturally affirming comprehensive sexuality education to Multnomah County youth. In 2016, MCHD YSHEP received an Innovative Teen Pregnancy Prevention (ITP3) grant from the federal government to begin the Sexual Health Equity for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (SHEIDD) project.

The SHEIDD (pronounced “sheed”) project seeks:

To promote comprehensive sexuality education and support for young people who experience intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) by working together to build the skills of parents/guardians, caregivers, support workers, teachers, health care providers and others to provide sexual health education and support to the young people in their lives.

To learn more about the specific sexual health education needs of young people experiencing I/DD, as well as the training and technical assistance needs of members of their support networks (support people), we conducted a community needs assessment to help us answer the questions:

- Who is the community we serve?
- What sexual health education and help do young people experiencing I/DD need?
- What kinds of help do support people need to provide sexual health education and support to young people who experience I/DD?

Through surveys and sharing sessions, young people experiencing I/DD and support people outlined 13 guidelines to help youth experiencing I/DD get the sexual health education they need, want and deserve. These guidelines lead to the following key recommendations:

Support the Sexual Health of Young People Experiencing I/DD

1. Provide holistic sexual health education to young people experiencing I/DD.

Recognize young people experiencing I/DD as social and sexual beings by providing them with holistic sexual health education that helps them learn:

- Who they are
- What their rights are
- How to express themselves
- How to build healthy relationships

2. Learn about young peoples' goals.

Use person-centered processes to learn about young peoples' individual relationship, sexual and reproductive health goals and help them get the education and support they need and want.

3. Provide regular skill-building opportunities.

Support the self-determination of young people by helping them build relationship and sexual health skills in group and individual settings using a variety of methods, especially:

- Videos
- Group discussion
- Role plays/acting

4. Facilitate peer connection.

Enhance community inclusion by creating environments where young people have access to accurate, affirming sexual health information and can teach and learn from each other.

Build the Capacity of Support People to Provide Sexual Health Education and Support to Young People Experiencing I/DD

1. Put policies and procedures in place to support the relationships and sexuality of individuals experiencing I/DD.

Make it clear that your organization or practice understands the importance of supporting relationship, sexual and reproductive rights of the individuals you serve. Provide staff with clear and consistent guidelines and ongoing training on how to provide sexual health education and support that enhances individuals' quality of life.

2. Support collaboration around sexual health education and support.

Provide teams with tools and strategies to have conversations and make proactive plans around relationship and sexual health education and support.

3. Make inclusive and adaptable education materials and resources available.

Make sure support people have the resources and teaching tools to provide quality, holistic, affirming sexual health education.

4. Provide training opportunities.

Supporting the relationship, sexual and reproductive health of individuals experiencing I/DD is complicated. Help support people build the skills they need to put all the pieces in place to assist the young people in their lives. Skills-based training should include:

- Understanding the relationship, sexual and reproductive rights of individuals experiencing I/DD.
- Applying rights-affirming organizational policies and procedures.
- Exploring and clarifying personal and professional values around relationships, sexuality and disability.
- Strategies to clarify the rights of individuals with I/DD and the responsibilities of support people.
- Learning approaches for teaching sexual health education to individuals experiencing I/DD.
- Strategies to collaborate with teams to provide sexual health education to individuals experiencing I/DD.

When put into practice, these recommendations can help build a system of sexual health education and services supporting the full rights and experiences of individuals with I/DD by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions about their health, increase safety, and seek mutually fulfilling relationships.