Healthy Relationships, Sexuality, and Violence Prevention

Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance (The Alliance)

February 18, 2021
Illinois Self Advocacy Alliance (The Alliance)

The Alliance is a network of advocates and self-advocacy groups around Illinois funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities.
Our Focus

- Our focus is to empower people to speak up and speak out about what they want/need, don't want/don't need, action plan their goals and participate in advocacy at the personal, community and statewide levels.
- We do this through education, trainings and individualized mentoring.
- We have 38 member group chapters throughout Illinois.
Nothing About Us Without Us!
History of Illinois House Bill 3299/Public Act 101-0506

- Voice of advocates
- Guardianship and Advocacy
- Regional town hall meetings
- Legislative process including Witness Slips and committee hearings
- Pushback

View the bill here
Applies to persons in developmental disability facilities and receiving habilitation (CILAs, state-operated facilities, day training programs, ICFDDs)
Grants individuals access to sex education, resources and treatment planning that supports:

| The right to sexual health and sexual healthy practices | The right to be free from sexual exploitation and abuse |
Sexual Rights Statements

People with disabilities have the right to have body integrity, privacy and personal choice respected, including the right to know how to protect oneself.

“I have the right to say what happens to and with my body. I have the right to privacy in showing and sharing my sexuality. I have the right to make my own choices about my sexuality. I have the right to learn how to keep myself safe from someone hurting me sexually and to use what I learned to help keep me safe.”
People with disabilities have the right to choose one’s own sexual partners and have privacy and dignity related to dating and sexual intimacy.

“I have a right to choose who I want to date, where I go on dates, and to have privacy when I go on dates. I also have a right to not go on dates and not have sexual intimacy. I have a right to have my choices on who I date, where I go, and my sexual intimacy respected. Sexual intimacy can include hugging, touching, and kissing.”
People with disabilities have the right to decide whether and when to be sexually active.

“I have the right to decide if I do or don’t want to have sex or sexual activity. I have a right to change my mind.”

Check out Easier to Understand Statement [here](#)
4. Decide whether and when to be sexually active.

"I have the right to decide if I do or don’t want to have sex or sexual activity. I have a right to change my mind."

5. Choose one’s own sexual partners and have privacy and dignity related to dating and sexual intimacy.

"I have a right to choose who I want to date, where I go on dates, and to have privacy when I go on dates. I also have a right to not go on dates and not have sexual intimacy. I have a right to have my choices on who I date, where I go, and my sexual intimacy respected. Sexual intimacy can include hugging, touching, and kissing."

6. Have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences.

"I have the right to be safe and feel good when having sex or sexual activities."

7. Decide whether, when and whom to marry and then having equality in any marriage.

"I can decide if I want to get married, when I want to marry, and who I want to marry. My marriage will be equal to anyone else’s marriage."

8. Decide whether, when and by what means to have a child or children, how many children to have and the spacing of one’s children.

"I have the right to decide if I want to have children or not. I can also decide when and how many children I want to have. I can decide how I want to have children whether it be by myself, naturally, adoption, surrogacy, or with medical help."
9. Have readily available and equal access to education and information about sex, safe/healthy sexual relationships and reproductive health including but not limited to: resources, services, counseling, family planning, contraceptive services, sex therapy services, and sexual equipment as well as resources specific to the prevention of, investigation of and trauma-informed response to sexual abuse.

"I have a right to learn about sex, safe and healthy sexual relationships, and reproductive health. I have to learn about condoms, birth control, and other ways of preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases to keep myself and my partner safe. I have a right to learn about ways to help prevent sexual abuse. If I have experienced sexual abuse, I also have a right to ask for and get help and services in a way that works best for me. Help and services can include counseling and support from a sexual assault center.

10. The right to receive that education, information, services and resources in a way that is free from discrimination, recognizes and supports one's own choices and interests, and promotes trauma-informed practices.

"I have a right to get information and learn in a way that I can best understand through videos, large print, audio, pictures, easy-to-understand language, or a combination of all. I can choose what education, information, services and resources I want, and a right to have those choices respected." 

11. Have the highest attainable standard of sexual health.

"Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It is not just about being free of sexually transmitted diseases or being able to have sexual activity in a way that works best for a person. I have a right to a positive and respectful approach to my sexuality and sexual relationships. I have the right to pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. I have a right to my sexual health being respected, protected, and fulfilled.

12. Have an effective remedy for violations of fundamental rights.

"I have a right speak up and speak out if someone has hurt my body or my mind. I have a right to tell someone if my rights have been violated. Some of the places or people I can tell include

- Family or friends
- Staff at my agency
- Doctor, nurse, counselor or therapist
- The Human Rights Committee at my agency
- The Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission
- Equip for Equality"

References:

- Illinois Imagines: Sexual Rights of Women with Disabilities
- Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5/2-100, 101.1, 102, 103, 112 and 5/4-211)

Revised January 2020
Revised February 7, 2020
Revised April 15, 2020
Sexuality Education Resources

- Websites
- Curriculum
- Books and Articles
- Videos

- Podcasts
- YouTube Channels
- Resources in Spanish

If you see the green thumbs up sign next to a resource, it means the resource is accessible, user-friendly, and contains plain language. Click here to access the list.
What Self-Advocates Want You To Know - 1

“I want to know more so I can decide what is right for me.”

“My body, my choice.”

“I didn’t receive any information in school or from my provider. I learned by the ‘school of hard knocks’. I am still trying to work through the trauma of learning the hard way.”
What Self-Advocates Want You To Know - 2

“We had classes at the group home in the past, but it’s been a long while. I can’t remember what I learned.”

“We learn best from people like us.”

Click [here](#) to view the document in full.
What Self-Advocates Want You To Know
June 1, 2020

Dear Service Providers,

As you work through the review, selection and implementation of sex education curriculum to use at your agency/organization, we want you to hear our voices and keep these words with you during the process:

"I want to know more so I can decide what is right for me."
"My body, my choice."

Relationships are important to our well-being and survival. No one really talks with us about healthy sexuality or relationships. We want to learn about healthy relationships and sexuality, and that information includes relationship and sexual rights; identity; boundaries; safety; violence prevention; communication; giving and getting consent; names for body parts; the physical and emotional aspects of relationships; and what are healthy relationships vs unhealthy relationships. Advocacy has to be part of these conversations; we need to know how to advocate for what we want and what we don’t want. We want to be part of conversations to change policies and procedures so that we can have more freedom to date, hang out with friends or romantic partners.

"I didn’t receive any information in school or from my provider.
I learned by the ‘school of hard knocks’.
I am still trying to work through the trauma of learning the hard way."

Many of us didn’t receive any information about healthy relationships and sexuality growing up or as adults. We may have received some information but it wasn’t always in a way we could really understand. We want to learn using educational resources and materials that include music, discussions, books, activities, videos, worksheets, and visuals. We want information that is in plain language and easy to understand. We want resources that are written by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. We want the information presented in a few different ways because not everyone learns the same way.

"We had classes at the group home in the past, but it’s been a long while. I can’t remember what I learned."

We have lots of ideas on how classes should happen. Depending on the topic, it may be best to have all women in a class or all men in a class instead of being mixed. There may be times it would work to have mixed gender classes - ask us what would be most comfortable for us! Classes can be either once a week, twice a month, or once a month. They shouldn’t be longer than an hour and half. Have a table or place/space at the classes where all kinds of brochures and information can be placed for us to check out and take - advocacy, food pantries, sexual assault centers, transportation, mental health, etc. Instructors should be flexible as discussions and disclosures occur. All classes must include time for discussion and for people to share their stories if they want. Include information on where to go to get help because we have scars and the scars take time to heal. Classes should create safe spaces each and every time for people to share, learn, disclose.

"We learn best from people like us."

We want to help teach the classes. We can go through the classes and then help teach the next set of self-advocates. There are also self-advocates in the community that can help teach the classes.

A Message of Thanks from the Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance, Inc.

Thank you to the many self-advocates who participated in focus groups, sharing experiences and speaking up about healthy relationships and sexuality. Your voices started the process that led to HB3299 being passed, and they continue to inform and guide as providers comply with the rule. We honor your voices, your experiences, and your stories. Continue to speak up and speak out!

The Illinois Self-Advocacy Alliance, Inc. (The Alliance) is proud to be an affiliate of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. This project was supported in part by grant numbers 19/2011 (ILDDD-02) from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20250. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.
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| The law says I am to receive developmentally appropriate sex education. What does that mean? | Developmentally Appropriate sex education is sex education that:  
  - Respects your needs, abilities and interests  
  - Takes into account how you best learn and understand things  
  - Considers how the sex education might make you feel  
  - Considers any physical or emotional concerns or needs that you have  
  - Considers your personal values, religious beliefs, and faith-based perspectives |
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| What will the sex education be about and who will provide it? | Sex education will be set up or provided by an agency staff person and may include:  
- Written information  
- Pictures  
- Webinars or videos  
- Discussion and talking  
- Asking questions and getting answers  
- Stories and examples  

If an agency staff person provides the training, he/she will receive education on how to conduct the training as well as being sensitive to and supportive of your needs. |
American Association of People with Disabilities Hearne Leadership Award Project

Mobilizing Support for Survivors with Disabilities who Have Experienced Sexual Violence

Considerations for Rape Crisis Centers

Considerations for Disability Service Providers

Considerations for People with Disabilities

Continuing the Journey

Healthy Relationships Discussion

Art & Trauma Recovery Event

Disability & Bisexuality

Healthy Sexuality & Sexual Expression

You can view all power points & recordings here
Next Steps!

Relationships on Tap: Monthly Chill and Chat

Considerations for Families & Guardians webinar

Continue with working group

Illinois Imagines Chicago team- Sexual Assault Awareness Month event
Keep in Touch!

Email: info@selfadvocacyalliance.org

Website: http://selfadvocacyalliance.org/

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IllinoisSelfAdvocacyAlliance/?ref=bookmarks