



# **Supporting the Village: Helping Parents and Caregivers to Support the Healthy Sexuality of Adults with Guardians**

**Middlesex County  
Department of Public Safety and Health  
Office of Health Services**

**Jeffrey W. Anthony, CHES  
Community Service Worker  
Middlesex County - Center for Empowerment**



# Sensitivity and Self-Care



We will be talking about sensitive topics,  
let's take care of ourselves.



**1-877-665-7273**

# The Center for Empowerment



- The Center for Empowerment is the New Jersey State-designated Sexual Violence Program for Middlesex County
- We strive to support and empower survivors and significant others affected by sexual violence, and to help eliminate all forms of sexual violence through community awareness and education



# The Center for Empowerment

- 24-hour hotline (1-877-665-7273)
- 24-hour in-person advocacy
- Individual counseling for survivors & loved ones
- Case Management and Referral
- Support groups
  - Male survivor group
  - Adult survivors of sexual assault or child sexual abuse
  - Art & alternative therapy groups
- Informative client workshops
- Prevention Education and Coalition
- Volunteer program



# Middlesex L.E.A.D.S.



A Collaboration between  
Middlesex County Center for Empowerment  
Alliance Center for Independence

 **MIDDLESEX**

C O U N T Y • N J

**CENTER FOR EMPOWERMENT**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE COUNSELING, ADVOCACY,  
AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

**1-877-665-7273**



**ALLIANCE** **CENTER**  
*for* **INDEPENDENCE**

# What we will talk about today:



- Healthy sexuality as a protective factor against sexual violence.
- Fostering trust and open communication between caregiver and care receiver.
- Talking about sexuality.
- Support and resources for caregivers.
- Support and resources for adults with guardians.



# Section 1:

## As a Parent or Caregiver





# Poll Questions

In regards to your child's sexuality:

- What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
- What words have you used with your child to describe body parts?
- What are your fears as a parent?
- What do you want to know the most?
- What do you expect of your child?





# Sexuality and Disability

- What messages did you receive from a parent/guardian/instructor about female sexuality?
- About male sexuality?
- How comfortable are you talking about sexuality?
- What messages have you received about people with disabilities and their sexuality?



# Four Guidelines for Parents and Guardians

1. Know Yourself.
2. It's Not About You.
3. Stop Talking.
4. Start Listening.

Breaking the Hush Factor: Ten Rules for Talking with Teenagers about Sex, Dr. Karen Rayne 2015

# What is Sexuality?



- Sexuality is more than sex assigned at birth or sexual intercourse.
- It is the entirety of gender identity and expression.
- How we interact with other people and have relationships.
- How we have a relationship with our own bodies.

# Healthy Sexuality



- Expressing your sexuality in a way that **respects the rights of others as well as your own needs and boundaries.**
- It is not only about sex; it is about thoughts, feelings, and interactions with other.
- **It is always free from violence and coercion; it is consensual and respectful.**



# Tips for Being a Positive Decision-Making Mentor

- Use teachable moments.
- Be approachable.
- It's okay to feel embarrassed.
- It's okay not to know the answer.
- You may choose to address a situation later.
- Recognize your limits.



# Tips for Being a Positive Decision-Making Mentor, Continued

- Avoid making assumptions.
- Combat myths or misinformation without belittling.
- Avoid preaching or lecturing.
- Look at the experience from the lens of your child, not yourself.
- Be realistic regarding success.
- Be patient.
- Apologize.



# Keys to Supporting People

- **Listen** without judgment
- **Believe** them
- **Support** unconditionally









# Section 2:

## Supportive Sexual Decision Making



# Age and Developmental Appropriateness



- Age appropriate information is relevant to what someone at a specific age might experience.
- Developmentally appropriate information is accessible and understandable to the individual.
- What is individually appropriate or important?
- What is contextually appropriate or important?



# Why Talk about Sex and Sexuality?

- They may already be talking about sex.
- They may already be having sex.
- They may have needs they do not know how to share.
- If they know they can talk to you, and something “bad” happens, instead of “my parents are going to kill me,” they will think “I need to talk to my parents.”



# Considerations

- Lack of sex education can lead to accidental/unaware perpetration of sexual violence, and entry into the legal system.
- If an individual never thought of themselves as sexual, what happens when someone else does?



# Consent in Context

- If someone has had a caregiver helping bathe and toilet, what is their sense of self? What touch is okay and not okay?
- How does the lack of autonomy increase vulnerability?
- Skin hunger – the desire to be touched, like a hug.



# Can They Consent?

- Assume yes.
- Ability to consent is generally viewed as having four parts:
  - 1) understanding information about the situation;
  - 2) understanding how the information can change the situation,
  - 3) understand the available choices about the situation; and
  - 4) ability to communicate a choice. ([Appelbaum, 2007](#))
- Communication does not need to be verbal.



# One More Thing About Consent

- There are specific evaluations to determine the ability to consent.
- Legal/plenary guardianship does not include sexual decision making unless specifically stated by a court.
- Sexuality is closely tied to the individual's fundamental rights to procreate and to bodily integrity. (PCAR)



# Section 3:

## Resources







# For Parents

- Breaking the Hush Factor: 10 Rules for Talking with Teens, Dr. Karen Rayne
- <https://www.aasect.org/referral-directory>
- <http://www.findingyourindividuality.com/>
  - Individual & group counseling services
  - Client & family centered educational workshops
- <https://www.arcnj.org/programs/criminal-justice-advocacy-program/equal-justice-talks-webinar-series.html>



# For Individuals with Disabilities

- <http://www.findingyourindividuality.com/>
  - Individual & group counseling services
  - Client & family centered educational workshops
- <https://sexsmartfilms.com/home/>
- <https://www.aasect.org/referral-directory>
- <https://www.drmitchelltepper.com/>
- <https://goboardmaker.com/products/pcs-classic-comm-about-sexuality-bms-download-win>
- The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability: For All of Us Who Live with Disabilities, Chronic Pain, and Illness, Mariam Kaufman, Cory Silverberg, Fran Odette



# Questions?



Thank you!



 **MIDDLESEX**

**C O U N T Y • N J**

**CENTER FOR EMPOWERMENT**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE COUNSELING, ADVOCACY,  
AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

**1-877-665-7273**

[empowerment@co.middlesex.nj.us](mailto:empowerment@co.middlesex.nj.us)



**Board of Chosen Freeholders**

Ronald G. Rios, *Director*

Charles E. Tomaro, *Deputy Director*

Kenneth Armwood, Charles Kenny, Leslie Koppel,  
Shanti Narra, Blanquita B. Valenti