



# **Supporting the Village: Helping Parents and Caregivers to Support Youths' Healthy Sexual Development**

**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**

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



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

 **MIDDLESEX**

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**CENTER FOR EMPOWERMENT**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE COUNSELING, ADVOCACY,  
AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

**1-877-665-7273**



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

# 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



# What we will talk about today:



- Healthy sexual development as a protective factor against sexual violence.
- Fostering trust and open communication between caregiver and care receiver.
- Support and resources for caregivers
- Support and resources for young people



# Section 1:

## As a Parent or Caregiver



# What is Sexual Development?



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





# Poll Questions

In regards to your child's sexual development:

- 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?



# Four Guidelines for Parents

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



# 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?

# 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



# Selfcare – It is that important.







# Questions?





# Section 2:

## Age & Developmentally Appropriate Education



# 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?

# Sexual Development and Sexual Behavior in Children



Research on Ages 2- 12

- Sexual responses are present from birth;
- A wide range of sexual behaviors for this age range are normal and non-problematic;
- Sexual development and behavior are influenced by social, familial, and cultural factors, as well as genetics and biology.

# Sexual Development and Sexual Behavior in Children



## Typical knowledge of Children Ages 2- 6

- Understand that people have different private parts
- Knows labels for sexual body parts, but may use slang words
- Have limited information about pregnancy and childbirth

# Sexual Development and Sexual Behavior in Children



## Typical knowledge of Children Ages 7 - 12

- Learn the correct names for genitals but may use slang terms
- Have increased knowledge about masturbation, intercourse, and pregnancy
- Understand the physical aspects of puberty by age 10



# Puberty

- Onset can happen between 8 and 13, depending on gonads/hormones
- Initial enlargement/growth of breasts
- Appearance of pubic, underarm, and facial hair
- Beginning growth of internal/external genitalia (testes/penis)
- First menstruation/period
- Voice changes
- First ejaculation



# Common Sexual Behaviors

Ages 2-6

- Do not have a strong sense of modesty, enjoys own nudity
- May explore body differences in genders
- Curious about sexual and genital parts
- Touch their private parts, including in public
- Exhibit sex play with peers/siblings, “doctor”
- Experiences pleasure from touching their genitals





# Common Sexual Behaviors

Ages 7 - 12

- Sexual play with children they know
- Interested in sexual content in media
- Touches own genitals at home/in private
- Developing sexual/romantic interests
- Shy about undressing



# Infrequent Sexual Behaviors

Ages 2 - 12

- Puts mouth on sex parts
- Inserts objects in rectum/vagina
- Masturbates with objects
- Touches others' sex parts after being told not to
- Touches adults' sex parts
- Asks to engage in sex acts
- Imitates intercourse
- Undresses for other people



# What is Sexual Play?

- Is exploratory and spontaneous
- Occurs intermittently and by mutual agreement
- Occurs with children of similar age, size, or developmental level, such as siblings, cousins, or peers
- Is not associated with high levels of fear, anger, or anxiety
- Decreases when told by caregivers to stop
- Can be controlled by increased supervision



# What is Problematic Sexual Behavior?

- Is a frequent, repeated behavior
- Occurs between children who do not know each other well
- Is between children of different ages, size, or development level
- Is aggressive, forced, or coerced
- Does not decrease after the child is told to stop
- Causes harm to the child or others



# Suggestions for Parents

- Do not overreact - most behavior is within typical or expected range.
- Inappropriate or problematic sexual behavior in children is not a clear indicator of sexual abuse.
- Most children will stop if they are told the rules, are well supervised, and praised for appropriate behavior,
- It is important to remember that children with problematic sexual behavior are significantly different from adolescent and adult sex offenders.
- If the sexual behavior is problematic as defined above, a referral for mental health services is recommended.



# When Answering Questions

- Answer the question that is being asked.
- Ask the child for more information about what they're asking.
- Less is more.



# Questions?





# Section 3:

## Resources







# For Parents

- Breaking the Hush Factor: 10 Rules for Talking with Teens, Dr. Karen Rayne
- Talk to Me First: Everything You Need to Know to Become Your Kids' "Go-To" Person about Sex, Deborah Roffman
- You're in the Wrong Bathroom, Laura Erickson-Schroth, MD, and Laura A. Jacobs, LSCW-R
- <http://www.findingyourindividuality.com/>
  - Individual & group counseling services
  - Client & family centered educational workshops



# For Young People

- What Makes a Baby, Corey Silverberg
- Sex is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings, and YOU, Corey Silverberg
- Nonnie Talks About... (series), Dr. Mary Jo Podgurski
- Your Body is Amazing Inside and Out and Belongs Only to You, Dr. Mary Jo Podgurski
- <http://www.findingyourindividuality.com/>
  - Individual & group counseling services
  - Client & family centered educational workshops



# Final Questions?





# References

1. Karen Rayne, P. (2015). Breaking the Hush Factor: Ten Rules for Talking with Teenagers about Sex. Austin: Impetus Books.
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3. The Center for Sex Education. (2014). Changes, Changes, Changes. (S. Mitelman, Ed.) Morristown, New Jersey: The Center for Sex Education.
4. The Center for Sex Education. (2016). Great Mentoring - Positive Conversations with Young People About Sexual Decisions. (P. Karen Rayne, Ed.) Morristown, New Jersey: The Center for Sex Education.

Thank you!



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



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