

Teens With Disabilities Need To Be Included In Sex Ed Courses

By: Sharon Langer

People sometimes make assumptions about persons with disabilities. They may assume that someone diagnosed with cerebral palsy and a wheelchair user also has a cognitive disability. Many assume that a youth with a disability doesn't have feelings and thoughts about sexuality. Because of these types of assumptions many teens are left out of the sexual education that other youth receive. There is no reason that youth with disabilities do not receive this very important education and it is time that we insist upon it for all our youth not only those that are able bodied or neurotypical.

The act of not educating these youth increases their risk of victimization and abuse. I have already discussed in prior articles that persons with disabilities are three times more likely to be abused and that likelihood is even higher for certain types of disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities or mental health disabilities. This is according to the Vera Institute of Justice. This is the reason that teens with disabilities **MUST** be included in sexual education.

We must empower these youth to understand public and private behavior, appropriate and inappropriate touching and how sex affects relationships. This education must be consistent and in a format that the youth can understand.

DIG is exploring this issue with the goal of making sure all our kids get an equal education and that includes sexual education. This is an important issue at the Intersection of Disability and domestic violence and sexual assault and one I will continue to discuss in this column. Any comments send them to me. Sharon@justdigit.org