

# LACK OF ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR HOOSIER WOMEN WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

## Sexual Health Risks for Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)



- It is estimated that 68% to 83% of women with developmental disabilities are sexually abused in their lifetime and less than half of them seek services for the abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- Young women with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities are more likely to have unsafe sex than their counterparts without intellectual disabilities.<sup>2</sup> They are more likely to get pregnant and be a mother.<sup>2</sup>
- Women with developmental disabilities are less likely to receive preventive screenings for their sexual and reproductive health than women without disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

## Unmet Needs and Barriers to Sexual Health Education for Hoosier Women with IDD



- In the state of Indiana, sexual health education is not comprehensive and not required for all students. Public schools are only required to teach about abstinence and promote marriage.<sup>4</sup>
- Students with ID receive both less sex education instruction in school and less parental instruction on sexuality at home than their counterparts without disabilities.<sup>5</sup>
- There is an unmet need for education about healthy relationships, including self-advocacy, emotions, intimacy, and consent.<sup>6</sup>
- There are a limited number of evidence-based sexual health curricula available for adult women with IDD.<sup>6,7</sup> Therefore, women with IDD are at higher risks and have more barriers in developing sexuality in a healthy way.<sup>7</sup>

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## LACK OF ACCESS TO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR WOMEN WITH IDD

*“I found very little, very little that was suitable for someone like my daughter. And so, it was very discouraging. And I talked to teachers, and they said, ‘We haven’t been able to identify really great materials either. We use these books from the library that are for young girls and during puberty.’ But those are totally not adapted for special needs people who, like my daughter, who are not able to read and not able to grasp what’s being addressed there.”<sup>6</sup>*

### Recommendations

- There is a need for accessible, comprehensive sexual health education for women with IDD in Indiana. There are positive effects of sexual health education on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors of adults with intellectual disabilities.<sup>8</sup>
- This education should emphasize the topics of consent and the characteristics of healthy intimate relationships. It should include information about preventive sexual health screenings, as well as sexual self-advocacy and how to cultivate skills required to communicate with sexual health care providers.
- An evidence-based sexual health curriculum should be developed for women with IDD. The curriculum must meet the needs and learning styles of women with IDD.
- Women with IDD should participate in the development and delivery of sexual health education for those with IDD. Their input is valuable and necessary to make the content and learning formats meaningful and appropriate for the target audience.
- Indiana’s students with IDD need access to more comprehensive sexual health education in grades K-12. This information should be presented by trained educators and be tailored to these students’ learning styles. The content of sexual health education should include the topic of consent and of the characteristics of healthy relationships.



*“I’ve had 15 relationships and I’ve – all of them have been bad except the current one I’m in right now.”<sup>6</sup>*

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