



RE:CON Conference
November 10, 2023

The Intersection of Employment and Sexuality:

**Building Healthy Relationships at Work
Using the Elevatus Training Curriculum for
People with Disabilities**

Guest Speakers



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Sexuality Education
Initiative



Mary Shehan
Community Inclusion Coordinator
Michigan Developmental
Disabilities Council

What We Want You To Gain Today

- **Understanding of human sexuality and how disability impacts a person's sexuality.**
- **Understanding the intersection of sexuality and employment for people with IDD**
- **Exploring a comprehensive curriculums for people with IDD**
- **Information on ways to support people with IDD to get sexuality education**

The Case For ALL People To Get Sexuality Education



- All living breathing human beings are, sexual human beings
- Sexuality impacts humans from birth to death
- Messages begin early on and continue throughout life
- Myths and stereotypes are perpetuated about people with IDD
- Sex is just one small portion of the conversation about sexuality
- ⁴ Meet people where they are at and move them along the continuum

US Statistics on Sexuality and IDD



- **People with I/DD are 7 times more likely to be sexual abused than someone without I/DD.**
- **In a nationally representative sample of middle and high school age youth (7th to 12th graders), the association of low cognitive ability with increased risks of STIs among adolescent boys and girls were found to be substantial.**
- **These findings indicated that 8% of adolescent male participants with low cognitive ability had been exposed to an STI, as compared to only 3% of males with average intelligence.**

US Statistics on Sexuality and IDD

Continued

- **For adolescent females who were sexually active, 26% of the cognitively impaired reported having an STI, a sharp contrast to 10% of adolescent females with average cognitive ability.**
- **The same study found that nearly 40% of cognitively impaired teenage girls had become pregnant—more than double the 18% rate of teenage girls without a mental disability.**

Our Sexuality Intersects With Other Life Domains

How we present our sexuality to the world impacts much.

- **Housing**
- **Employment**
- **Religion**
- **Ethnicity**
- **Age**



Messages About Sexuality Start Early On



You would be amazed at the diversity in people's perspectives about how early people should start learning about sexuality.

- **When did you first learn about sexuality?**
- **What messages were you given?**

Advocating for What You Want Is Important!

- **Self-advocacy** is about people with developmental disabilities “taking control over their own lives, making decisions, solving problems and speaking for themselves.”
- According to the mission statement of green mountain self-advocates, **sexual self-advocacy** is just one more area of advocacy that people with disabilities need to speak out about.



Green Mountain Self-Advocate's Information Shows:

**Adults with developmental disabilities
have said clearly:**

- **We are sexual beings**
- **We are interested in knowing
how to express our sexuality in
safe and healthy ways**
- **We want to have relationships-of our own
choosing, in our own time frame, and shaped by
our own values**

Myths & Stereotypes About People With Disabilities & Sexuality

- **Childlike**
- **Over sexual**
- **Asexual**
- **No ability to consent**
- **Incapable of understanding**



What Do People With IDD Want In Relationships?

The same thing as everyone else!

- **Happy, fulfilling, relationships**
- **To be honored and respected by another human being**
- **To be free of abuse and have the education to identify when abuse is happening.**
- **To own their own bodies**



What Messages Do We Want To Give?

- **People w/ disabilities are whole people**
- **All people are sexual human beings**
- **It is more than ok to be interested in sexuality education and in learning about resources**

What Can You Do To Include Everyone?

- **believe us**
- **listen to us**
- **give us factual, information**
- **support their decisions for our own lives**
- **honor their pronouns**
- **welcome us into your organizations**
- **seek to understand them and look for ways to include them**

Like all people, recognize how we are the same as you, rather than see us for our differences

Rainbow Guide Video



MASS Rainbow Guidebook Intro

Our Lives, Our Choices, Our Rights!

The Rainbow Support Group Guidebook for LGBTQ+ and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

RainbowGuidebook.com

Watch on  YouTube

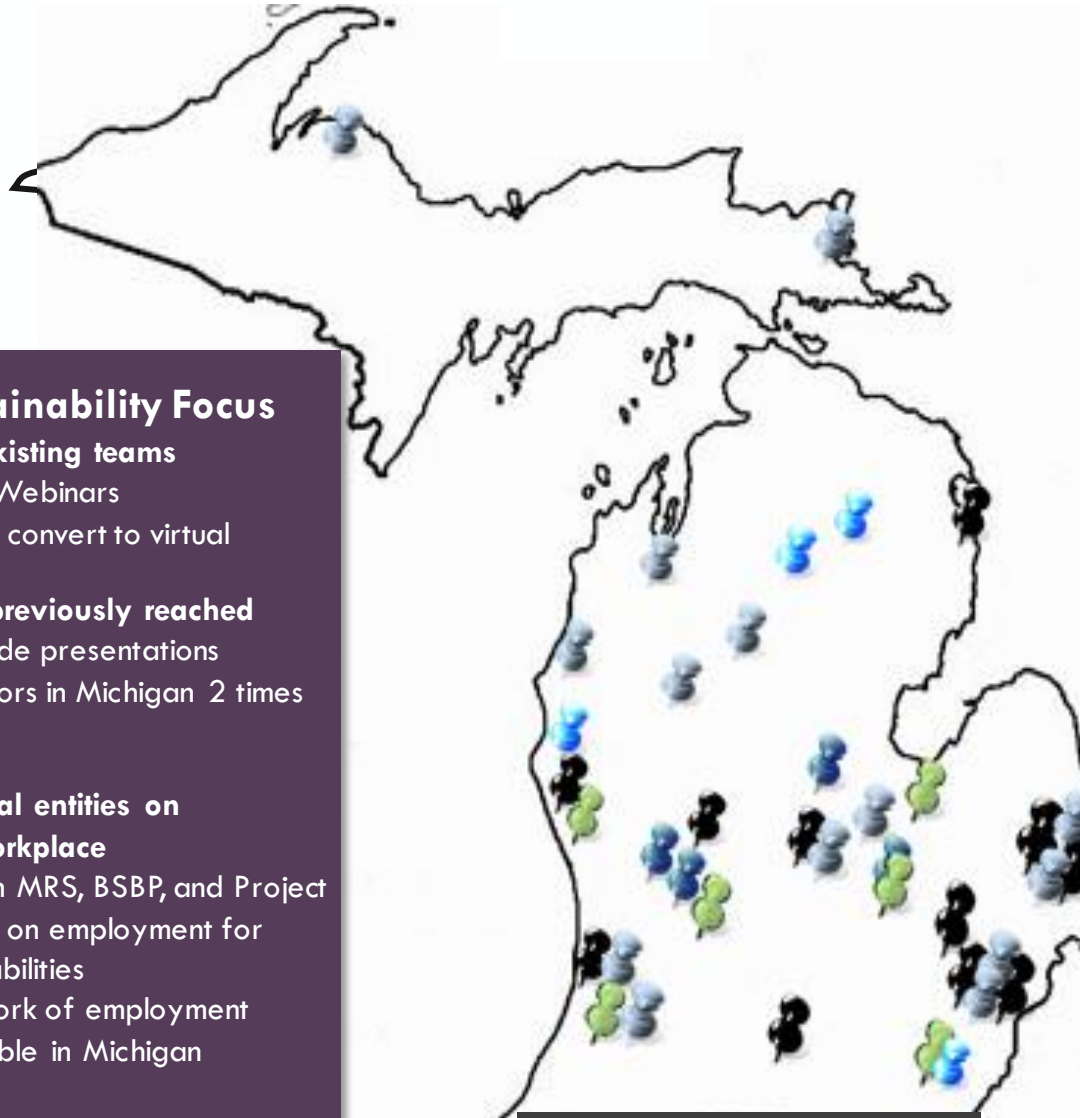
Watch later Share

YouTube play button icon

The image shows a YouTube video player interface. On the left, there is a white text overlay with the title 'Our Lives, Our Choices, Our Rights!' and a subtitle 'The Rainbow Support Group Guidebook for LGBTQ+ and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities'. Below the subtitle is the website 'RainbowGuidebook.com' and a 'Watch on YouTube' button. On the right, there is a video thumbnail showing four people (two women and two men) smiling and holding rainbow flags. A red play button icon is overlaid on the video. In the top right corner of the video player, there are icons for 'Watch later' and 'Share'.

Rainbow <https://youtu.be/il-oXQRKsI0>

Teams Formed Since 2018



2020/2023 Sustainability Focus

Support and Enhance existing teams

- Continued Team Webinars
- Support teams to convert to virtual

Expand into areas not previously reached

- Continue to provide presentations
- Train new instructors in Michigan 2 times per year

Collaborate w/vocational entities on education specific to workplace

- Collaborate with MRS, BSBP, and Project Search, working on employment for people with disabilities
- Increase a network of employment resources available in Michigan

Work on family engagement Re: this topic

- Presentations for families
- Present at Conferences
- Creation of family specific tools

TEAMS

Alpena
Ann Arbor CIL
Capitol Area
Cass
Big Rapids
Detroit CMH
Detroit AWBS
Detroit CLS
Detroit STEP
Gladwin
Hillsdale
Grand Rapids +2
GENHS
YWCA
LACASA
Livingston +2
Saginaw
Bay City +2
Sault Ste Marie
St. Clair
Macomb
Manistee
Marquette
MOASH
Monroe +2
Muskegon +3
Mt. Pleasant
NWES, Traverse City
Oakland +2
Oakland ISD, 17 Districts
Osceola
Private Practice +3
Van Buren CMH
Washtenaw DN
West Branch

Who Is Being Reached By This Initiative?

Since the first 2018 Team Training:

- 76 individuals with I/DD have received training as sexuality educators
- 185 professionals and parents have received training as sexuality educators



“I have shared topics from the curriculum with people with disabilities and others without disabilities. The message is universal to all because too often people have not had the opportunity for proper Sexuality Education regardless of disability.”

~Bonnie Gonzalez, Muskegon Team Educator

Since the 2018 Summit, Many People have received Education:

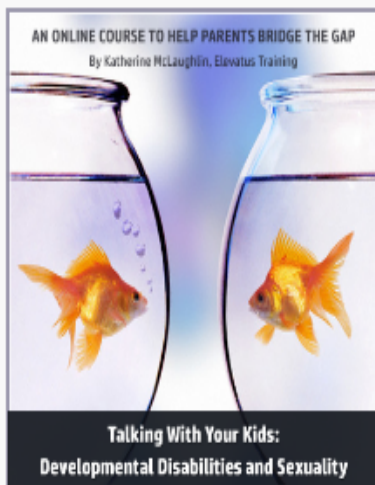
- 290 family members
- 897 transition staff
- 1,038 other agencies
- 1,764 individuals with I/DD

Sexuality Education for People with Developmental Disabilities: 22 Lesson Curriculum

- **Comprehensive**
- **Trauma informed**
- **Evidences informed**
- **Designed by and with people with IDD**



The Parent Curriculum



For Parents/Guardians: Talking With Your Kids: Developmental Disability and Sexuality

This 4-module, self-study course offers a proven, nuts-and-bolts approach to discussing sexuality and responding to behaviors. You'll come away feeling more skillful, comfortable and confident when discussing sexuality with your children.

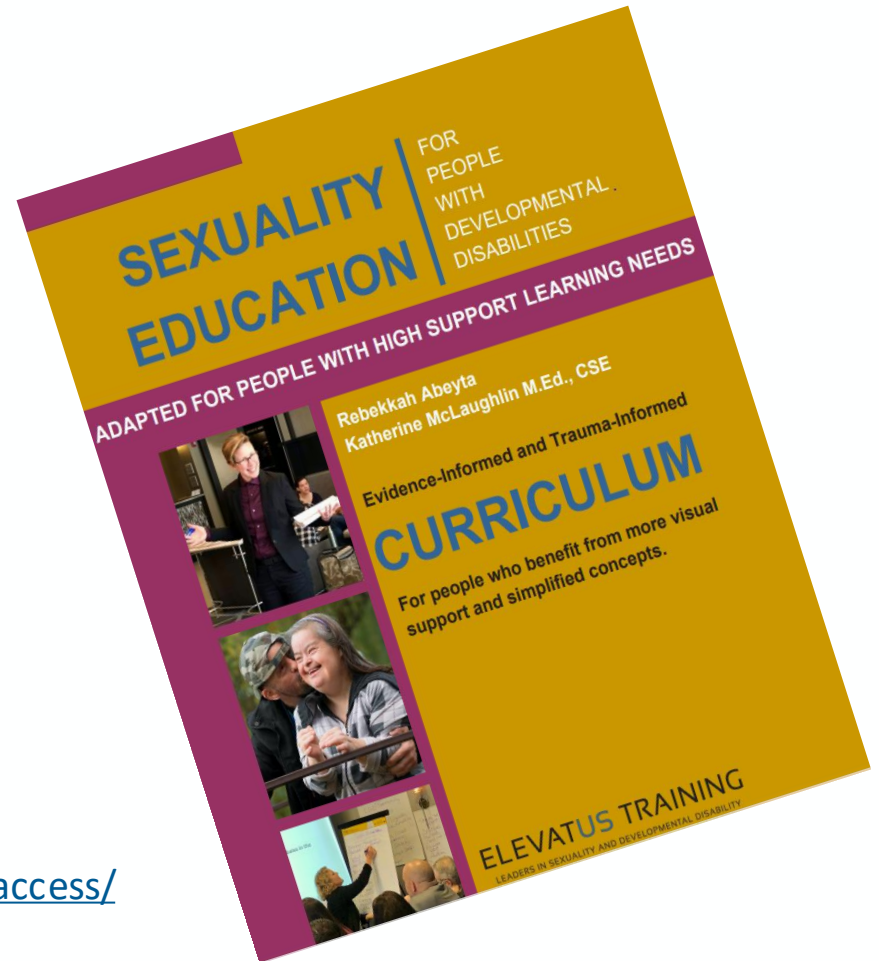
[LEARN MORE →](#)

<https://www.elevatustraining.com/workshops-and-products/talking-with-your-kids/>

Newly Released Curriculum for People with Higher and More Complex Needs

- **Trauma informed**
- **Evidences informed**
- **Designed by and with people with IDD and national experts**
- **Created to provide**

<https://www.elevatustraining.com/curriculum-hsn-access/>



The Staff Curriculum

Live Workshops & In-Service Training



Three-Day Certificate Training: Become a Sexuality Educator and Trainer

A 3-Day Certificate Training for anyone who works with people with developmental disabilities and wants to lead sexuality education classes and staff/parent trainings.

[LEARN MORE →](#)

<https://www.elevatustraining.com/workshops-and-products/developmental-disabilities-and-sexuality-101/>

Building Healthy Relationships at Work: 12 Lesson Curriculum

- **Trauma informed**
- **Evidence informed**
- **Designed by and with people with IDD**
- **Created in conjunction with Project Search**



LESSON 1

GETTING STARTED



Main Points



Some people like certain things and others don't like those things. You get to decide what you like and don't like. It's OK to have a different opinion than your friends and other co-workers. Everyone is different and that is OK.

Group agreements help us feel safe in class and help us learn. We will review the group agreements for every lesson. Please remember to follow the group agreements.

It is important to share parts of ourselves with others like "I can," "I am," and "I am part of." This helps people get to know us. This is the beginning of forming relationships.

LESSON 2

GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION



Main Points



A pronoun is a word we used to replace a person's name. Usually people identify with either he, she, or they. You get to decide what pronoun fits you and it's OK to tell people what your pronoun is.

Gender Expression is how we show our gender. Do we wear dresses? Have short hair? You get to decide how you show your gender as long as it doesn't violate any work policies.

Our gender identity is another part of who we are. People usually identify as men, women, or something else such as non-binary.

Some people are assigned a gender at birth and it matches how they feel inside. This is called cisgender. Some people are assigned a gender that doesn't match how they feel inside. This is called transgender.

LESSON 3

DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS



Main Points

There are 6 different types of relationships. Handout #5.

In each of these relationships there are different ways to touch and different kinds of topics that are OK to talk about.

All touch needs to be OK with both people. There needs to be a “yes” and needs to be freely chosen.

It is OK to tell someone you don’t want to high five them or shake their hand. It is your body and you get to decide what is right for you.

People can move from one type of relationship to another. For example, a casual friend can become a close friend or a close friend can become a partner or sweetheart, but it takes time and has to be something both people want.

LESSON 4

PUBLIC & PRIVATE



Main Points



Public means:

Public places are where other people are there or might be there. It's a place where people can go in and out. All workplaces are public, even the restrooms are public restrooms.

Private means:

Private places are where you are alone and no one can come in and out. It is at home in your bathroom or bathroom with the door closed.

There are different types of topics that you can talk about with others. Some topics are public and some are private.

Main Points Continued...



All work relationships and places at work are public. We only talk about public topics.

If you have something private to talk about talk to your close family or friends, a doctor or nurse, or your instructor. All of these conversations need to be in a private place with the door closed.

People can feel uncomfortable when you ask private questions and you are their co-worker.

LESSON 5

COMMUNICATION



Main Points



There are three styles of communication, speaking up (assertive), shy (passive), and bossy (aggressive).

The most effective style is speaking up.

Not only do we communicate with our words, but also with our body language. When we are listening to others we listen to their words, but also their body language.

Having your words match your body language helps people understand you better.

LESSON 6

DECISION MAKING



Main Points



There are lots of decisions we make every day. Some of these decisions are easy and some are very difficult.

Easy decisions don't take a lot of time to make, but bigger decisions do take more time.

There are 7 steps to making a decision.

It is your body, your mind, and your life and you get to decide what is right for you.

LESSON 7

Positive Relationships At Work



Main Points

Co-workers are not your close friends. They are friendly, but they are not your friends.

You mostly spend time with your co-workers at work. Sometimes you spend time outside of the worksite with them, but it is a work-related event like a fundraiser or a baby shower for a coworker.

There are certain rules for interacting with co-workers. There is the 10 - 5 Rule and when you greet them, you can high five, shake hands or fist bump. We don't hug co-workers. Also, if you work with a close friend or your sweetheart, you need to treat them like a co-worker and not a close friend or sweetheart.

Main Points Continued...

When talking with co-workers, you can talk about public topics. You may ask a couple of questions, and when you are asked a question, answer in 1 - 2 sentences.

In general, if you don't know a customer you welcome them, but you don't touch them or ask private questions. If you know the customer, you can high five, fist bump, shake hands or say hello. Customers that you know are not your close friends.

Customers can either be people we don't know or casual friends depending on how long you know them. This is another example of how people can change the type of relationship they are in.

If you work with close family and friends, casual friends, and sweethearts, you need to put them in the co-worker category and treat them like co-workers. Even if you hug them all the time outside of work, you can't do that at work.

LESSON 8

FRIENDSHIP



Main Points



Friendships are important for all of us. It takes a lot of practice to make and keep friends.

Close friends you have known for a long time. They can almost feel like family. You trust them, tell them private things, hug them, spend a lot of time together.

Casual friends are new friends. They may be other workers or someone in a group with you. You wouldn't hug them or share private information with them. You only spend time together in the group.

People can move from one type of relationship to another, but that takes time and something both people want.

Whether close or casual friends work with you, you want to treat them like co-workers.

LESSON 9

MOVING FROM FRIEND TO PARTNER/SWEETHEART



Main Points

Being attracted to someone as a partner or sweetheart is friendship plus more. More is those extra feelings, sexual feelings.

Not everyone is OK to be your partner. Usually it is a close friend who is around your age.

It is not OK to date co-workers or customers.

There are three steps to becoming a couple, feeling interested, getting to know the person, and becoming a couple.

LESSON 10

HEALTHY/UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Main Points

There are 7 healthy qualities in any relationship.

There are three steps to speaking up. Speaking up in your relationships takes practice.

There are many Do's and Don'ts when communicating in all types of relationships.

If you think your relationship is abusive, talk to your instructor or skills trainer to get help.

LESSON 11

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AT WORK



Reminder of Workplace Policies

Sexual harassment is serious and can result in losing your job or legal action.

If you have questions about what is appropriate to do or say, make sure you ask me who the right person is to talk to in our company.

If you have questions about who is appropriate to date within the workplace, make sure you ask me who the right person is to talk to in our company.

If you are being harassed and feel uncomfortable or unsafe, please let me know so we can find the best way to fix this problem.

Remember: harassment isn't only sexual. You can be harassed based on religion, disability discrimination, race, ethnicity, etc. If you feel unsafe in any way and are unsure what to do about it, find someone to talk to.

Main Points



Healthy boundaries at work helps you become a better employee and keep your job.

Healthy boundaries means you know the limits and rules of the worksite and respect the limits and rules.

There are certain people that you shouldn't flirt with or ask out like co-workers and customers. If you flirt with a co-worker or customer that would be crossing a boundary.

Main Points Continued...



The hard part is that sometimes flirting and sexual harassment can look similar. The difference is whether the flirting is wanted or not.

If you cross a person's boundary and they tell you, you can tell the person that you are sorry and you won't do it again.

If a person crosses your boundary, it is OK and very important to speak up using the speaking up in a relationship format.

If you think you are being sexually harassed, talk with your instructor or your manager.

LESSON 12

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER



Main Points



Being in a healthy work environment can mean many things such as.....

Both people understand what touch is OK in their relationship.

People touch each other in OK ways, high five, fist bump, shake hands.

People are friendly to one another at work.

They talk about public topics.

Customers feel welcomed by interns.

Interns know how to have short, friendly conversations with coworkers.

Interns understand the policies and procedures for being at the work environment.

Main Points Continued...



No one crosses a boundary. If they do, they apologize.

Everyone is healthy, friendly, and safe.

People respect each other's time and space.

And many other ideas.....

The decisions we make at work impact our job in positive ways and negative ways.

There are many rules for being an employee. Make sure the employee knows the general rules and the site-specific rules.

Sometimes we make mistakes and what is important is to learn from our mistakes and try not to make the same mistakes again.

Resource Websites

Elevatus Training - Leaders in Sexuality and Developmental Disability

Comprehensive sex education should be available to all students in Michigan – MLPP

<https://itgetsbetter.org/>

<https://www.denver7.com/news/pride/when-it-comes-to-inclusiveness-these-9-lgbtq-denver-bars-are-leading-the-way-for-people-with-disabilities>

<https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/People-with-Disabilities>

Questions

What questions do you have for us?

**While we take any questions,
we will keep our information on the screen**



Speaker Contact Information



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