

TITLE: The Impact of Comprehensive Sex Education Policy on Middle and High School Students with Mild to Moderate Intellectual Disability

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: Yes

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Comprehensive sex education amongst Oregonian middle and high school students with mild/moderate intellectual disability. Target audience: sex educators, sexual health professionals, DOE professionals, policy-makers

ABSTRACT: Abstract Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. This high-minded ideal is attainable through comprehensive sex education and should be the goal of any educator or professional in human health and sexuality. Most sex education in the U.S. does not meet either national or international standards for healthy understanding of human sexuality and development. Whatever gap in the knowledge does exist for typical students, it is magnified for those students with intellectual disabilities. For these students, who often show similar patterns of sexual interest and activity, sexuality is often even more taboo, and their sexual natures often denied by larger society due to a constellation of social bias, myths surrounding their disorder, social isolation, and under-developed curricula specific to their needs. This equity gap may expose this population to unhealthy psychological development and shame, possible sexual abuse and exploitation, and allows the continuation of harmful and dehumanizing myths. It is crucial that our sexuality and public health professionals begin to advocate for better services and normalization of the sexuality of persons with intellectual disabilities to support the development of these students and their relationships with future romantic and sexual partners. Results of a small sample exploratory survey indicate that in Oregon an inequity exists and our students with mild/moderate intellectual disabilities are not receiving the sex education they are entitled to by the Human Sexuality Education (OAR 581-022-2050) law. Key Words: comprehensive sex education, intellectual disability, equity, barriers, curricula, stigma, myth

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss social myths and misunderstandings having a negative impact on the sexual health of people with intellectual disability. Name mechanisms needed to better ensure equity in sex education.
