

# SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY

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## POLICY

Metro Support Services, Inc. (MSS) holds the position that all individuals receiving services have the right to a fully functional and total life. The expression of feelings toward one another, sex, marriage, and family are part of that function and total life.

MSS strives to provide individuals with the opportunities to learn, in all arenas of life, including knowledge of their sexuality, responsible sexual behavior, knowledge about what are acceptable societal behaviors/standards, and other areas of sexuality as appropriate to the individual. MSS's aim is to create an environment where individuals will be able to make effective and responsible decisions regarding their sexuality.

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT), and other persons of significance in the life of each individual, will assist individuals in meeting their aspirations, goals and needs, through offering support, guidance and honoring the informed choice of each. Individual's needs will be the guiding principle in all aspects of planning.

The dignity, privacy, and rights of each individual will be protected. An individual's responsible expression of his/her sexuality will be respected. Sexual expression resulting in an infringement on the rights of another individual is not considered responsible behavior and will be addressed through IDT involvement and intervention as appropriate to the individual.

MSS will not allow individuals to be exploited. Sexual activity between staff, contractual providers or volunteers and individuals receiving services is considered absolutely unacceptable. Such misuse of power is abuse and will be dealt with according to MSS policies and State and local law. The Department of Social Services, Adult Protection Unit and applicable local law enforcement agency will be contacted upon suspicion of such a situation.

This policy addresses the following specific areas:

- MSS will respond to individual's questioning and concerns with sensitivity and dignity in a relaxed, mature, and professional manner commensurate with each individual's chronological age and level of understanding;
- Adults have the right to possess or have access to pornographic materials and literature unless otherwise indicated in their Individualized Service Plan (SP) and/or within legal confines. Individuals also have a responsibility to maintain such materials in a responsible manner which avoids violation of peers and housemates rights;

- Masturbation shall be considered a normal means of sexual expression. As with all explicit sexual behavior, it is appropriate to particular times and places and under the following circumstances:
  - If proper hygienic procedures are followed;
  - If the behavior is not infringing on the rights of others;
  - If conducted in private;
  - If masturbating is not a health hazard.
- Upon admission to MSS and annually, each individual will be assessed and their ability to give informed consent for sexual issues determined;
- Nudity shall be recognized as a normal occurrence of human behavior and is appropriate in private situations and locations;
- Dating shall be recognized as a significant socializing experience in the socio-sexual development of individuals;
- Education, information, and referrals regarding birth control, its benefits, consequences, etc., shall be available to individuals and their families upon request and assessment of individuals' needs by IDT members;
- Sexual intercourse is a normal means of sexual expression between consenting adults. As with all explicit sexual behavior, it is appropriate to particular times, places, and circumstances, as follows:
  - Individuals are consenting adults and have been determined to possess the ability to give informed consent;
  - The behavior is conducted in private;
  - The individuals have demonstrated an understanding of and responsibility for their sexual behavior (i.e. informed consent);
  - The individuals have been provided with information regarding birth control and sexually transmitted diseases;
  - The behavior does not infringe upon the rights of others.

MSS will not tolerate sexual abuse, mistreatment, or exploitation of any individual receiving services by any other person. The decisions to have and raise a child are complex ones which demand considerable deliberation; the impact of these decisions affects all aspects of the parents' and the child's lives. MSS will assist, as an active member of the IDT, an individual receiving services to gather information and weigh the benefits and costs, thoroughly and effectively, prior to making the informed decision to have and/or raise a child.

Several key principles of pregnancy and parenthood should be considered:

- The person(s) are consenting adults and have been determined to possess the ability to give informed consent;
- The individual(s) demonstrate an understanding of and a responsibility for their social and sexual behavior;

- The individual(s) have been provided with information regarding and possess an understanding of birth control, the birth process, parenthood, sexual diseases, genetic and health components, legal and financial issues, religious aspects like adoption and abortion, etc.;
- Counseling referrals have been made available and utilized to the extent appropriate to the individuals;
- Parenting and Child Birth and Care classes have been provided and utilized to the extent appropriate to the individuals.