



**Inclusion Conference**  
**March 18, 2026**

# Sexuality, Inclusivity and the Dignity of Risk:

## The Need for Body Autonomy is Critical for All

---



# Guest Speakers



**Frank Vaca (He, Them)**  
**Leaders For Inclusion**  
**Michigan Disability**  
**Rights Coalition**



**Mary Shehan (She, Her)**  
**Community Inclusion Coordinator**  
**for the Michigan Developmental**  
**Disabilities Council**

# What We Want You To Gain

- **Discuss the needs of students with IDD and neurodiversity of all types**
- **Review what experts convey as comprehensive, trauma informed, and evidenced based education**
- **Identify stakeholders who may benefit from sexuality education and research pertaining to students with IDD**
- **Provide resources in the area of sexuality education for students with IDD and the staff who work with them**

# Video: Sexuality and People with Developmental Disabilities

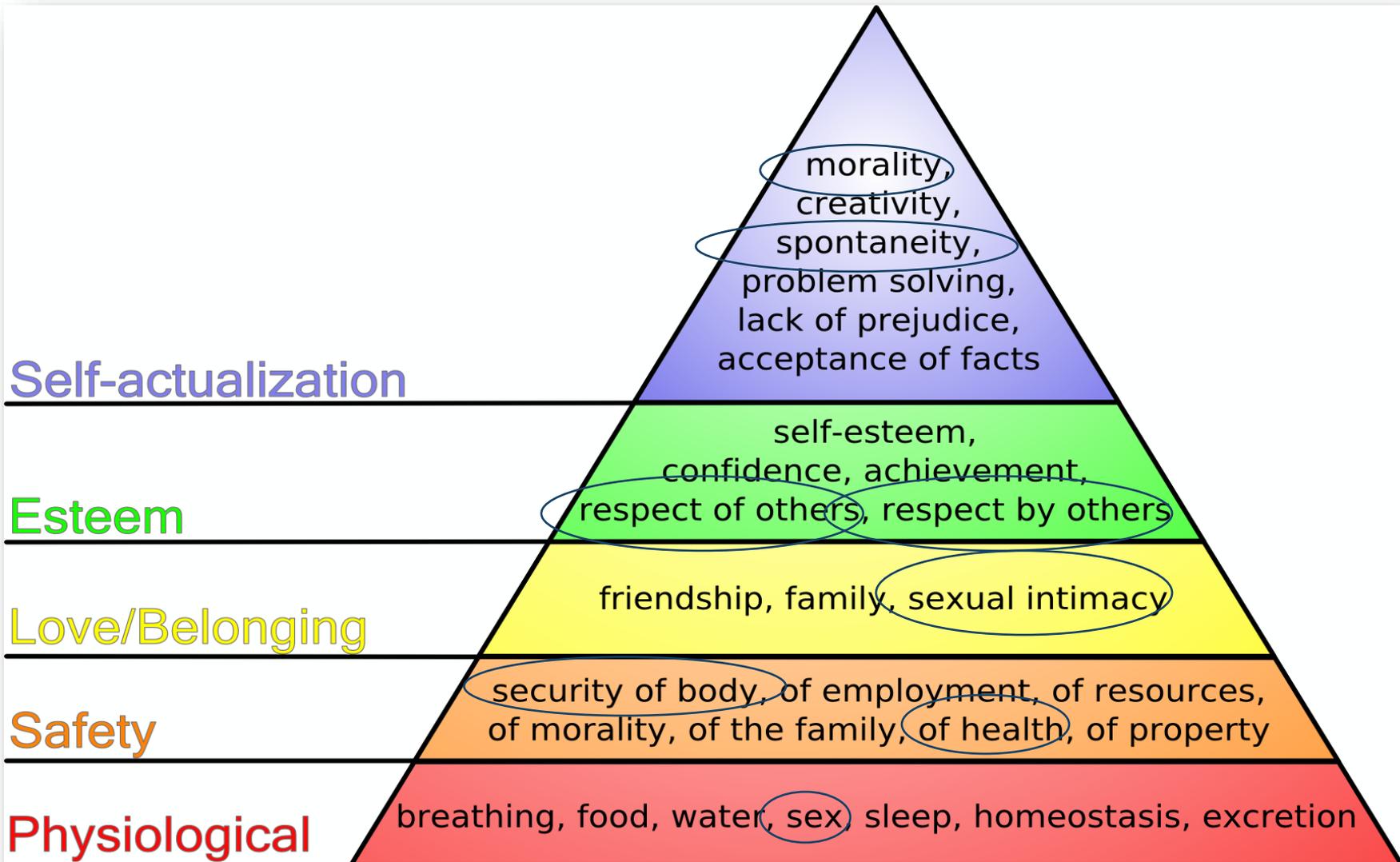


# Building The Case For Education



- **Sexuality impacts humans from birth to death**
- **Messages begin early on**
- **Myths and stereotypes perpetuated**
- **Separate sex from sexuality**

# We are all human beings, so we are all sexual beings



# Sexuality Impacts Us Our Whole Lives



# Statistics on Sexuality, Sexual Abuse, And People With IDD

- People with disabilities are **14.2%** of the population, and are **twice as likely** to be a victim of a violent crime (**NCVC, 2016**)
- People with IDD are **7 times** more likely to be sexual abused than someone without IDD. (**NPR 2017**)
- As many as **83% of women and 32% of men** with a developmental or intellectual disability will be **sexually victimized** within their lifetime (**Johnson & Sigler, 2000**)

# Statistics on Sexuality & people with I/DD

- In **2010**, the U.S. Census Bureau found that there were approximately **2.8 million** people under the age of 15 who had a physical, intellectual, or emotional disability. People with disabilities are often excluded from sex education programs in schools but should have access to these programs.
- According to a **2021** report from **SEICUS**, **36 states don't include youth with disabilities in their sex education requirements at all, or provide resources regarding accessible sex ed.**

# Statistics On Sexuality & People With I/DD

- A **2023** study on romantic relationships for adults with I/DDs **85%** said that romantic relationships were part of their lives since high school. Time spent with partner was limited and they wanted more time with their current partners.
- A **2024** study showed **60%** of those who reported relationships, said they had experienced Interpersonal Violence
- Types of abuse reported was:
  - Emotional 50%**
  - Physical 35%**
  - Sexual 15%****40%** did not seek assistance when this was occurring.

# What Messages Did You Receive?



**Step One: On your own, think about the messages that you got growing up about sexuality.**

**Step Two: In your groups, share what you feel comfortable sharing.**



# The Difference Between Sex and Sexuality



# Difference Between Sex & Comprehensive Curriculums

- **Sex refers only to the physical act of sex in all its forms**
- **Sexuality refers to a much bigger set of topics and covers many aspects of humanity and our culture**

## SIXTEEN DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY

**EXTERNAL BODY PARTS**

**INTERNAL BODY PARTS**

**FUNCTION OF BODY PARTS**

**GENDERS AND GENDER IDENTITY**

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

**PUBERTY AND AGING**

**EMOTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS**

**MASTURBATION & SEX**

**CONTRACEPTION & STI's**

**PREGNANCY & INFANCY**

**LAWS ABOUT SEXUALITY**

**SEXUAL ABUSE**

**DISABILITY EFFECTS ON SEXUALITY**

**SEX AND THE MEDIA**

**RELIGIOUS VALUES**

**OWNERSHIP OF YOUR BODY**

# SIXTEEN DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY

<p><b>EXTERNAL BODY PARTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach female body parts</li> <li>• Teach male body parts</li> <li>• Explain transgender terms</li> <li>• Discuss slang terms</li> </ul>	<p><b>INTERNAL BODY PARTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach female body parts</li> <li>• Teach male body parts</li> <li>• Discuss slang terms</li> </ul>	<p><b>FUNCTION OF BODY PARTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts considered male</li> <li>• Parts considered female</li> <li>• What the parts do</li> </ul>	<p><b>DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts considered female</li> <li>• Parts considered male</li> <li>• Difference within genders</li> </ul>
<p><b>PUBLIC AND PRIVATE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are public body parts</li> <li>• What are private body parts</li> <li>• Who can touch private parts</li> <li>• Public and private places</li> </ul>	<p><b>PUBERTY AND THE AGING BODY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will happen to body w/aging</li> <li>• When it happens</li> <li>• Adult vs. Minor</li> </ul>	<p><b>FEELINGS, EMOTION AND RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing hormones</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Dating</li> <li>• Partnering</li> </ul>	<p><b>MASTURBATION AND INTERCOURSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize privacy</li> <li>• Spend equal time on what people CAN do</li> <li>• Effects of disabilities on these issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>AVOIDANCE OF PREGNANCY AND STI's</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine people's desire to parent</li> <li>• Discuss various methods</li> <li>• Discuss effectiveness</li> </ul>	<p><b>PREGNANCY AND INFANCY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe in detail</li> <li>• Cover issue of wanting something to love</li> <li>• Discuss responsibilities</li> </ul>	<p><b>LAWS ABOUT SEXUALITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequences of choices</li> <li>• Minor vs. Adult</li> <li>• Public vs. Private</li> <li>• Discuss social media</li> <li>• Mandatory reporting</li> </ul>	<p><b>SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss terms</li> <li>• What to do if people feel violated</li> <li>• What can happen if people violate someone else</li> </ul>
<p><b>DISABILITY &amp; EFFECT ON SEXUALITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do others look at them?</li> <li>• How do people see themselves?</li> <li>• Physical and genetic effects of disabilities</li> </ul>	<p><b>SEXUALITY AND THE MEDIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is sexy?</li> <li>• Ethics of using one's sexuality</li> <li>• Where is the line?</li> </ul>	<p><b>RELIGIOUS VALUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give general information on religions</li> <li>• If not taught, people learn from media &amp; peers</li> </ul>	<p><b>OWNERSHIP OF THE BODY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Autonomy</li> <li>• Teach people how to say no</li> <li>• Teach people when to say <u>no</u></li> <li>• Teach people how to say <u>yes</u></li> <li>• Teach people when to say <u>yes</u></li> </ul>

# 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**



# Video: Sexual Self-Advocacy is Especially Difficult for People With IDD



# 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**

Implementing in  
a School System



**Teaching Sexuality  
Education in  
Michigan Public  
Schools Varies from  
District to District**

# Sexuality Ed. Curriculums In Schools?

- **Summary of Legal Obligations for HIV/AIDS Education**
- **Guidelines for Guest Speakers**



[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638\\_74639\\_29233\\_29803---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638_74639_29233_29803---,00.html)

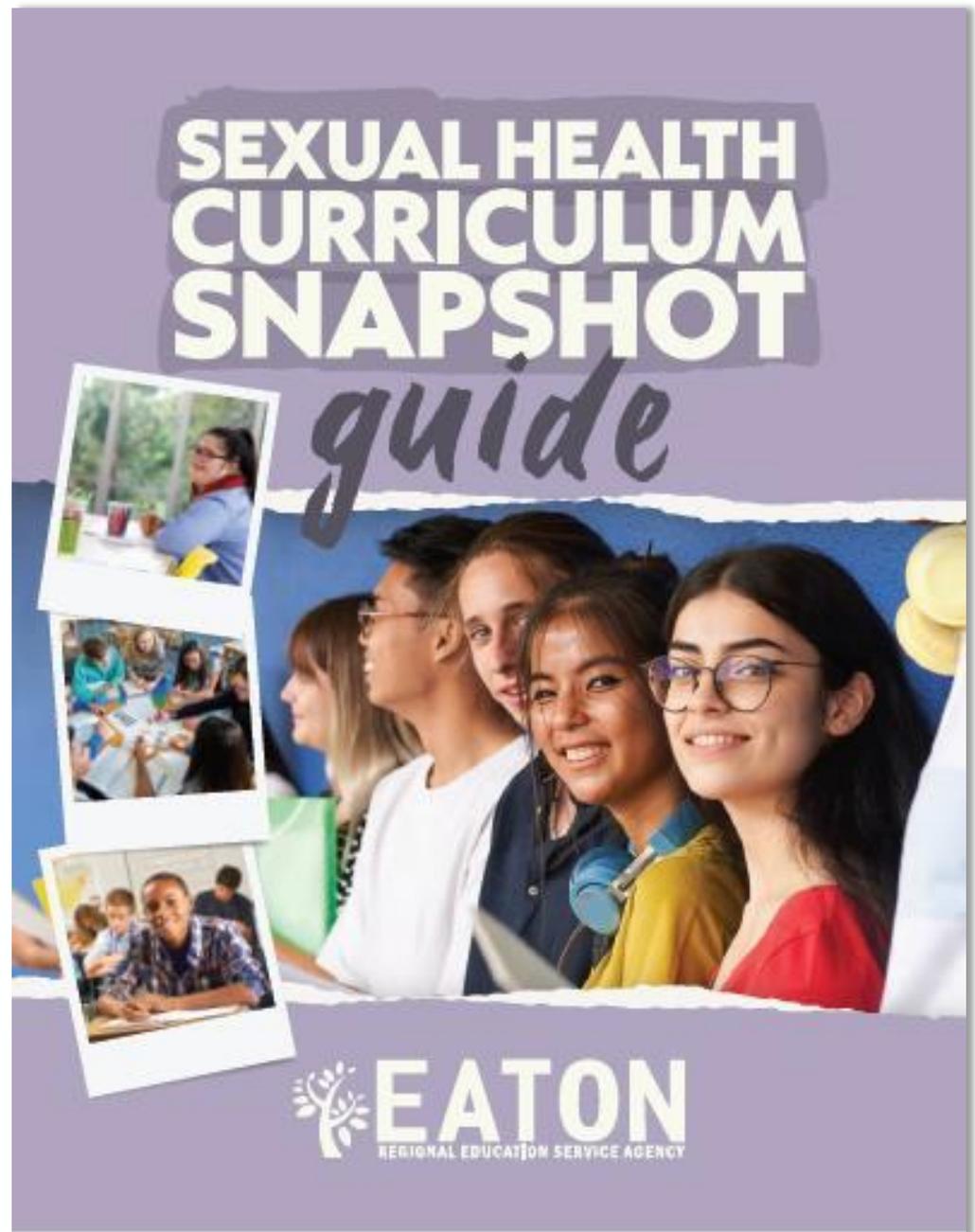
# Michigan law specifies that sex education curriculum offered in public schools must be age-appropriate, not medically inaccurate, and meet the “A-K” content standards

## Michigan’s “A-K” Content Standards for Sex Education

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Discuss the benefits of abstaining from sex until marriage and the benefits of ceasing sex if a student is sexually active.</li><li>B. Include a discussion of the possible emotional, economic and legal consequences of sex.</li><li>C. Stress that unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are serious possibilities of sex that are not fully preventable except by abstinence.</li><li>D. Advise students of the laws pertaining to their responsibility as parents to children born in and out of wedlock.</li><li>E. Ensure that students are not taught in a way that condones the violation of state laws pertaining to sexual activity.</li><li>F. Teach students how to say “no” to sexual advances and that it is wrong to take advantage of, harass or exploit another person sexually.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>G. Teach refusal skills and encourage students to resist pressure to engage in risky behavior.</li><li>H. Teach that the student has the power to control personal behavior. Students must be taught to base their actions on reasoning, self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, self-control, and ethical considerations such as respect for self and others.</li><li>I. Provide instruction on healthy dating relationships and how to set limits and recognize a dangerous environment.</li><li>J. Provide information about how young parents can learn more about adoption services and the safe delivery of newborns law.</li><li>K. Include information informing students that it is unlawful to have sex or sexual contact with an individual under the age of 16.</li></ul> |
|---|---|

**PDF Format:** Please be aware that the guide is a very large 90 some page PDF file. To access the guide, we recommend opening it in a PDF reader for optimal viewing. If you choose to open it in a web browser, please be advised that the pages may appear smaller.

[\*\*SHE Snapshot Guide\*\*](#)



# Tips for Working with people who have Guardians

Know your state's **terminology and laws**; what authority does the guardian really have?

**Don't assume** whether someone has or does not have a guardian

- Ask for legal documentation

Be mindful of guardianship type (**full/plenary or partial**)

# Rainbow Guide Video

## **Our Lives, Our Choices, Our Rights!**

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

*RainbowGuidebook.com*



# Where Can You View The Rainbow Guidebook?



<https://rainbowguidebook.com/chapters/introduction/>

# What The Council Ratified



## POSITION STATEMENT Sexuality

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MiDDC) believes disability and sexuality are natural parts of the human experience. Sexuality encompasses sex, gender identities, expressions, roles, and sexual orientation. Historically, a lack of sexuality education for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) has been a key factor in higher rates of abuse.

**All people have the right within interpersonal relationships to:**

- develop friendships and emotional and sexual relationships where they can love and be loved.
- begin and end any type of relationship as they choose.
- be treated with dignity and respect.
- enjoy privacy, confidentiality, and freedom of association.

**The following rights and needs must be affirmed, respected, and defended for people with I/DD. The right to:**

- exercise inherent sexual and reproductive rights, including freedom of choice and autonomy.
- participate in sexuality education that promotes autonomy and sexual self-advocacy.
- use accessible, comprehensive materials in plain language about sexuality.
- be involved in the creation of, vetting of, and delivery of any sexuality education initiative geared toward people with I/DD.
- receive safe, high-quality sexual health and reproductive health care.
- access high-quality, culturally relevant domestic and sexual violence services and prevention programs.
- enjoy protection from sexual harassment, exploitation, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

**Individuals with I/DD considering the potential of having and raising children also have the right to:**

- receive individualized education and information to reflect each person's unique ability to understand.
- make their own decisions related to having and raising children with support as necessary.
- make their own decisions related to using birth control methods within the context of their personal, cultural, or religious beliefs.
- be protected from sterilization solely because of their disability.



**Phone Number:**  
(517) 335-3158



**Email Address:**  
[mdhhs-dd-council@michigan.gov](mailto:mdhhs-dd-council@michigan.gov)



**Website:**  
[michigan.gov/ddcouncil](http://michigan.gov/ddcouncil)

# What The Council Ratified



## POSITION STATEMENT Sexuality

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MiDDC) believes disability and sexuality are natural parts of the human experience. Sexuality encompasses sex, gender identities, expressions, roles, and sexual orientation. Historically, a lack of sexuality education for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) has been a key factor in higher rates of abuse.

**All people have the right within interpersonal relationships to:**

- develop friendships and emotional and sexual relationships where they can love and be loved.
- begin and end any type of relationship as they choose.
- be treated with dignity and respect.
- enjoy privacy, confidentiality, and freedom of association.

**The following rights and needs must be affirmed, respected, and defended for people with I/DD. The right to:**

- exercise inherent sexual and reproductive rights, including freedom of choice and autonomy.
- participate in sexuality education that promotes autonomy and sexual self-advocacy.
- use accessible, comprehensive materials in plain language about sexuality.
- be involved in the creation of, vetting of, and delivery of any sexuality education initiative geared toward people with I/DD.
- receive safe, high-quality sexual health and reproductive health care.
- access high-quality, culturally relevant domestic and sexual violence services and prevention programs.
- enjoy protection from sexual harassment, exploitation, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

**Individuals with I/DD considering the potential of having and raising children also have the right to:**

- receive individualized education and information to reflect each person's unique ability to understand.
- make their own decisions related to having and raising children with support as necessary.
- make their own decisions related to using birth control methods within the context of their personal, cultural, or religious beliefs.
- be protected from sterilization solely because of their disability.



**Phone Number:**  
(517) 335-3158



**Email Address:**  
[mdhhs-dd-council@michigan.gov](mailto:mdhhs-dd-council@michigan.gov)

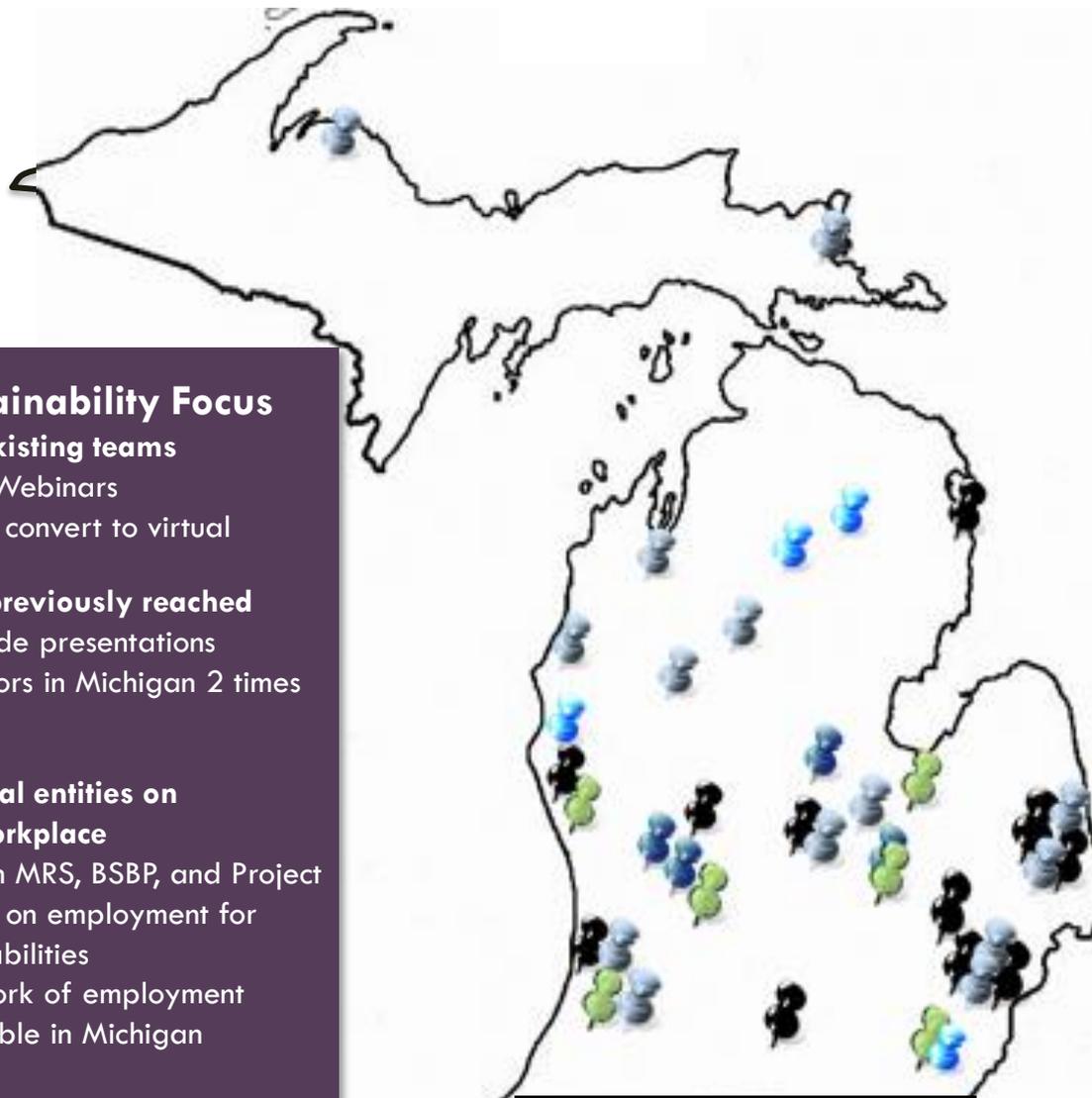


**Website:**  
[michigan.gov/ddcouncil](http://michigan.gov/ddcouncil)

# Teams Formed Since 2018

## TEAMS

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



## 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

# Who Is Being Reached By This Initiative?

**Since the first 2018 Team Training:**



- **97 individuals with I/DD have received training as sexuality educators**
- **254 professionals and parents have received training as sexuality educators**

**Since the 2018 Summit, Many People have received Education:**

- **383 family members**
- **1,119 transition staff**
- **2,589 other agencies**
- **4,401 individuals with I/DD**

**“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**

# Where Can You Get Free Training Advocate: By Becoming a Peer Educator

## Becoming A Sexuality Educator: Using Elevatus Training Curriculum

A 3-Day Workshop, For People Who Want to Become  
Instructors or Peer Educators

August 5, 6, and 7, 2026, from 8am-4pm



People with disabilities are sexual human beings. This means that like all humans, they have sexual feelings and needs. We believe that people with disabilities have a right to access education. We know that this means that we need to sustain a cadre of trained educators throughout our state, to make sexuality education available to all who want it. Many people with disabilities get negative messages about sexuality. This curriculum aims to dispel myths and replace them with positive messages for people with disabilities.

### Learning Objectives:

- Exploring your own bias about sexuality
- Get comfortable about teaching about sexuality
- Learn team teaching techniques
- Learn about the Elevatus Training curriculum
- Learn the rules about teaching sexuality in public schools
- Practice using the Elevatus Curriculum to teach

Increase your skill and comfort level when addressing sexuality with people. Join us for an interactive workshop series. This series will take place virtually from 8:00am-4:00pm. Registrants must be in attendance on all three dates:

- Wednesday, August 5, 2026
- Thursday, August 6, 2026
- Friday, August 7, 2026

### What do people say about this training?

"I have found satisfaction in supporting others to use their voice, and grow healthy and safe relationships"

*Lisa Tippet, Peer Educator*

### FREE-VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Please click on the link below to register or, scan the QR Code

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/#Hy2cjMQTtaZF7QkF5bl9g>

If you need assistance registering, please contact:

[grahamr10@michigan.gov](mailto:grahamr10@michigan.gov)



Sponsored by the  
**MIDDC**  
Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council

# Where Can You Get Free On-Line Training?

## DISCOVER THE: BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

FOR PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

October 1 - November 2, 2026 One Session Each Thursday From 4pm-6:30pm



We all want to live full and happy lives with the ability to learn, live, work, and have healthy relationships with friends and others. This is true for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) as well, and one place they can form relationships with others is in their workplace.

Unfortunately, people with IDD have lost jobs, not because they cannot do the work, but because of how they interact with others at work. We have seen people with IDD exhibit a variety of behaviors that get them into trouble in their workplace. For example:

- Hugging others frequently
- Asking co-workers or, supervisors out on dates
- Following co-workers around because they are attracted to them
- Calling co-workers repeatedly outside of work
- Mis-using colleague's pronouns or making comments about gender

Workplace relationships are unique in that they require specific ways of interacting. People with IDD need to learn how to navigate these relationships, to be successful at their worksite and, keep their jobs.

Join presenters from Michigan Developmental Sexuality Education Teams for a six-week series. This Zoom presentation helps support competitive, integrated, employment. The six-week series covers the twelve lessons from the Elevatus Training curriculum developed in partnership with Project Search. The curriculum is available for review in the Project Search Portal or the [elevatustraining.com](http://elevatustraining.com) website.

Participants must attend all six sessions

**ELEVATUS TRAINING**

LEADERS IN SEXUALITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

### FREE-VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

To register, click on the link below:

Registration Link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/ULXDWb6RmGEziMLalUPbw>

If you need assistance with registering, contact:

[GrahamR10@michigan.gov](mailto:GrahamR10@michigan.gov)

Sponsored by DD Council



# Resource Websites

- [Elevatus Training - Leaders in Sexuality and Developmental Disability](#)
- <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](#)
- **Consent for Kids**  
**Consent: A Cup of Tea**  
**Classic Consent**



# Video: Just the Two of Us



[Just The Two Of Us | CoorDown | World Down Syndrome Day 2022 \(youtube.com\)](#)

# Speaker Contact Information



**Frank Vaca (He, His, Them)**  
**Coordinator For Leaders For Inclusion**  
**Michigan Disability Rights Coalition**  
[fvaca@MYMDRC.org](mailto:fvaca@MYMDRC.org)



**Mary Shehan (She, Her, Hers)**  
**Community Inclusion Coordinator**  
**Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**Phone: (517) 243-0619**  
[shehanm@michigan.gov](mailto:shehanm@michigan.gov)