

KELOWNA AND DISTRICT SOCIETY FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

POLICY: SEXUALITY

Applies to: All Personnel, Volunteers, Service Recipients, Families, Advocates and Caregivers

PREAMBLE

Sexuality is the integration of the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual aspects of an individual's personality as they express their maleness or femaleness. "Sex" refers to gender, male or female and "uality" means total. Sexuality means all the parts of us.

There will be some aspects of this policy, with which, on the basis of a person's own ethical or moral code, employees might disagree with or find personally unacceptable. There is no expectation that such staff should change their own values. Equally, they will not as professionals impose their values upon the individuals they support.

Why are guidelines necessary?

- The sexuality of people with a developmental disability is something, which is often chosen to be ignored.
- There is considerable evidence that people have difficulty learning about sexuality and the resulting lack of knowledge and limited skills would suggest there is a need for more structured help from those employed to support them.
- Often staff and parents are anxious over the possible sexual exploitation of a person with a developmental disability. This fear may result in over-protection and the person is deprived of opportunities to express their sexuality.
- People with a developmental disability need to be acquainted with the sexual and social rules of society in order to reduce their vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

If staff are to compensate for the lack of sex education people with developmental disabilities have, be aware and sensitive to the sexuality of people with a developmental disability and counter the risk of sexual exploitation, then specific and practical guidance in this area are necessary.

Sexuality is only one aspect of a wider range of interpersonal skills, and these skills are rarely the result of formal teaching, but are built over time from incidental learning experiences. For most people, learning is made possible by the availability of a series of different environments and a variety of other people to learn from. Unfortunately, such opportunity is frequently missing from the lives of people with a developmental disability. Their social interactions are usually supervised and restricted to other people with disabilities and staff. If people with a developmental disability are to develop meaningful relationships, then staff needs to provide the "personal space" necessary and opportunities to experience and develop a wide range of relationships.

POLICY

KDSCL provides an environment of openness and safety that promotes healthy appropriate and informed decision-making regarding sexuality. KDSCL encourages individuals to experience all aspects of community living including the expression of one's sexuality, regardless of the person's sexual orientation or ability/disability.

KDSLCL believes that people with disabilities have the right to be provided with information and education on human sexuality, express their sexuality, establish relationships, marry or live together, have children and make choices in all areas of human sexuality.

KDSCL staff's role is to provide information to individuals to make informed decisions, offer guidance and facilitate individual's questions. Staff does not impose or discuss their own sexuality beliefs or opinions. They only provide factual information intended for educational purposes that has been approved by KDSCL management. This can also be done with the help of the individual's physician or public health nurse.

Underlying this policy is the belief that people with a developmental disability, no matter how severe, have the same rights to experience the patterns of life that we value for ourselves.

Effective/Revision Date

April 28, 2003
March 27, 2006

Board Approved

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