AID in PA

Supporting safe, healthy relationships and sexuality

EDUCATING ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT

GENERAL

It's important to teach people of all ages about sexual abuse and assault. Knowledge is the best way to prevent sexual abuse and assault from happening. It also teaches what behaviors are okay and not okay – and that they should tell someone they trust if they ever feel uncomfortable.

Sexual abuse and assult is higher among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD)

Individuals with ID/DD are seven times more likely to experience sexual abuse or assault than the general population. However this is likely an underestimate of true prevalence as some individuals with ID/DD have limited communication abilities.

Many providers don't ask about abuse or assault

They may assume they can tell if a patient has been abused, they don't know how to ask, or might be nervous to ask. It's important to become comfortable asking specific questions about abuse and assault, especially if you notice warning signs of abuse or assault.

Create a safe place where people with ID/DD can talk openly about sexual abuse and assault

Ways to create a safe place include: encouraging conversations about body safety, creating an environment where there is open communication about sexual health, allowing individuals to ask questions without judgment, and listen and believe individuals when they talk about situations that made them uncomfortable.

Teach individuals with autism how to identify sexual abuse and assault

For people with ID/DD, confusion about what sexual abuse or assault is often keeps the trend continuing. It's also important to identify trusted adults who they can turn to for help if they ever experience abuse or assault.

Listen and believe someone who says they might have been abused

Allow the individual to share their experience without judging or asking questions. Ask what you can do to help, and let them know they did the right thing by talking about what happened. Finish the conversation by letting them know you will help keep them safe and get them help.