



HRTW National Resource Center
www.hrtw.org

Tips & Resources on Sexuality for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities

Tips from Patti Hackett, a mom and former teacher.

1. **FAMILY – Be the person your child can come to for answers** – Before your child starts school, begin a dialogue that will let he/she know you can be asked any question. Friends will do a lot of talking, be the source of accurate information. What you know share – what you don't know – connect with an expert who has that information (websites, email, other families, or adult mentors).
2. **MEDICAL PROVIDERS (Doctors, Nurses, Therapists) – Get the conversation started.** You may be the person who supports the parent in beginning these conversations with their child. Later you may be asked to be a resource expert. Similar to the advice for families, what you know share – what you don't know – connect with an expert who has that information (rehabilitation psychologists, adult mentors, websites). Masturbation needs to be an open topic. Later other issues may need to be addressed: assistive tech aides to support child/youth, issues of ethical touch and dignity to birth control, changing role for families, safety and decision making. Ask about and respect cultural beliefs.
3. **EDUCATORS – Get to know the experts to connect to.** While you hope that families and medical providers are talking and providing information and support to the child/youth, sometimes your classroom becomes the start point for the dialogue. Sexual behaviors have a time and place – and the classroom setting is not one of them. Without some guidance and support, the student may be headed for discipline issues where all he/she needed was information and some skill-building. See if the school district's sexual education curriculum is inclusive for people with disabilities. You do not have to be an expert in this area – but do reach out to experts in the community and connect the family and youth to these resources as well. Ask about and respect cultural beliefs.

This tips and tool is a sampling of resources – and does not imply endorsement of content or materials, but is provided to give you a starting point in learning more about the topic. ♥ are my favorites.

ARTICLES

TIME MAGAZINE -- A Very Special Wedding, July 2006

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1214946,00.html>

A new generation of people with Down syndrome are living longer, finishing school, getting jobs and now--with a little help--beginning to marry. Photo essay of the wedding

http://www.time.com/time/photoessays/2006/special_wedding/

♥ **NY TIMES -- Learning to Savor a Full Life, Love Life Included (April 2006)**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/20/us/20romance.html?ex=1153368000&en=350b0637e69d2f45&ei=5070>

The pair were coached in dating, romance and physical intimacy by a social service agency at the cutting edge of a new movement to promote healthy sexuality for the seven million Americans with mental retardation and related disabilities.

WEBSITES – Guides & Info

♥ **MyPleasure Sex & Disability Guide** <http://www.myplesure.com/education/disability/index.asp>
Complete web resource for education, information and sexual enhancement products for people who have various disabilities or health-related issues that might limit sexual functioning or satisfaction.

♥ **Quality Mall – Person Centered services supporting people with developmental disabilities**

<http://www.qualitymall.org/directory/dept1.asp?deptid=16>

Terrific site that lists 32 products under Sexuality including: Self before Sex, Hand Made Love (masturbation) ethical issues, choosing relationships

♥ **DISABILITY SOLUTIONS - Sexuality Education--Building a Foundation for Healthy Attitudes**, Terri Couwenhoven, MS

Part 01- <http://www.disabilitysolutions.org/pdf/4-5.pdf>

Part 02 – <http://www.disabilitysolutions.org/pdf/4-6.pdf>

Family Village

<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/general/sexuality.htm>

List of websites on sexuality for people with disabilities

HRTW National Resource Center

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This site focuses on understanding systems, access to quality health care, and increasing the involvement of youth. It also includes provider preparation plus tools and resources needed to make more informed choices! *Sexuality Issues for Youth with Disabilities and Chronic Health Conditions*

AAP-Sexuality Education of Children and Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities

aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;97/2/275.pdf

Policy brief by the Committee on Children with Disabilities provides resources for providers and families,

FLORIDA DD COUNCIL - Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents with

Developmental Disabilities: An Instructional Guide For Educators of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, Sexuality Across the Lifespan" www.albany.edu/aging/IDD/documents/parentWORKBOOK.pdf

GLBT - THE GAY AND LESBIAN NATIONAL HOTLINE

teenadvice.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.glnh.org%2Fhome.htm

GLNH is a non-profit organization which provides a vital service to our community by providing nationwide toll-free peer-counseling, information and referrals: 1-888-THE-GLNH (843-4564)

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

www.siecus.org

SIECUS believes that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of life and that all people have the right to the information, skills, and services they need to make responsible sexual decisions.

The Sexual Health Network

www.sexualhealth.com (search terms: guide, disability)

Access to sexuality information, education, mutual support, counseling, therapy, healthcare, products and resources for people with disabilities throughout the lifecycle and those who love them or care for them.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES ON HEALTH – Med Line -- Teen Sexual Health

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/teensexualhealth.html

Excellent and trusted information on a variety of topics to insure sexual health and informed youth.

Webliography on Sexuality for Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.bccpd.bc.ca/wdi/sex&dis.html>

A bibliography on sexuality and disability from the Wellness and Disability Initiative