

Issues in Sexuality and Deafblindness

Robbie Blaha, M.Ed.
Austin, Texas

The Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness is situated on the traditional and unceded lands of the Musqueam Peoples. We are mindful and grateful for the time we spend here, learning and working.

Which issues are addressed today?

Appropriate touch

Modesty

Masturbation

Appropriate Touch

- Non-contact society
- Gathering information as a deafblind person involves touch or close viewing

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: Remember that the way you touch them is how they will touch others

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: Teach sign/concept of asking permission
- Proactive information
- Be an ambassador for the child

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: How to get others attention

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: Stay calm or you will teach groping
- Provide information so they don't have to steal it by groping

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: Greeting rituals
- Additional characteristics

Appropriate Touch

- Meeting strangers

Appropriate Touch

- Strategy: If you have a groper, develop an Behavior Intervention plan

Appropriate Touch

- Hugs- start early with a variety of interactions, make lists of who you can hug

Modesty

- Societies perspective - strict unwritten rules about appropriate dress and behavior
- Typical kids receive instruction in modesty as a part of growing up and children with deafblindness deserve and need the same.
- Honor the problem – communicate with the family and your team. Make an instructional plan for the IEP

Modesty

- Children with deafblindness learn concepts based on how they are treated.

Modesty

- Build habits for a lifetime by building modesty into routines

Modesty

- Hold each other to high standards
- Mixed messages

Modesty

- Provide modesty vocabulary/concepts:
- Teach the sign for private
- Make a list of private places for an individual child (ex. his room, bathroom etc.)

Modesty

- Avoid triggers that lead to disrobing (tags on back of shirt, all dressed up etc.)

Modesty

- Wait means yes

Don't create a stripper!

- Stay calm if they start to remove clothing in public
- Chronic stripping needs a Behavior Intervention Plan
- Complicated clothing is difficult to remove
- Communication rather than confrontation

Masturbation

“This is perhaps one of the most controversial topics related to sexuality education. Because this topic provokes strong feelings tied to both cultural and religious values and beliefs, it is a very difficult topic for most parents and educators to address”

Masturbation

A range of beliefs and values about masturbation can exist among parents and educators.

- Masturbation is a normal healthy behavior that occurs in all human beings as they develop sexually, and it should not be stopped.
- Masturbation is an acceptable behavior if it is done in private.
- Masturbation is a shameful behavior that, if practiced, must be kept private.
- Masturbation is a sinful or shameful behavior that must be stopped.

Masturbation

- Finding common ground
 - Masturbation is unacceptable in public places
 - Masturbating in public is a deviant behavior that violates the laws.
 - A person who masturbates in public is unwelcome and avoided.

Masturbation

- Proactive:
 - Increase supervision
 - Clothing
 - Positioning