



Disability & Healthy Relationships ECHO Summary

Date: 5/14/2026

Topic: Abuse: Prevention, Signs, & Reporting

Presenter: Erin Meottel

Presentation Summary: Erin Meottel from Peace House in Park City, UT shared information about different types of abuse that occurs over the lifespan, with a special focus on what it might look like for people with disabilities, including specific warning signs for each age group. Then she talked about primary, secondary, and tertiary approaches to abuse prevention. She shared several ideas of primary abuse prevention tactics, ranging from focus on the individual, relationships, communities, and society as a whole. To conclude, Erin shared some general best practices to keep in mind when needing to file a report.

Community Questions & Responses:

1. What experiences have you had in providing DV/SA/Abuse education to individuals with disabilities?
 - ***Speak to them privately, but sometimes lack adequate accommodations for clients with hearing impairments, sometimes reach out to victim advocates – rural areas lacking support services for victims.***
 - ***Arizona UCEDD partnership with Special Olympics – curriculum for trainers working with youth athletes adapted – boundaries, consent, biology, healthy relationships, sexual decision making. Group of young adults trying it out over 8 weeks.***
 - ***Consultation program in Alaska for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome disorders, sexual education for youth and caregivers, foster families, grandparents. Topics included what is “normal” behaviors, what is appropriate for developmental ages. Topics for kids included boundaries, physical body parts, appropriate touch. Additional teacher education about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and specific needs/expectations for kids with this diagnosis.***



2. What are the barriers you see in connecting individuals with disabilities to DV/SA resources?

- *Parents and guardians, especially when it comes to adults. Barrier that comes up whether its restricting access to education, making assumptions and infantilizing their adult children*
 - *Need to educate parents and guardians on healthy sex education, but if the state doesn't want us to do it, then how will we do it?*
 - *Not allowed to talk much about relationships and sexuality in UT. When we're not allowed to talk about these concepts, they tend to get glossed over. Also, policy can be a barrier in UT*
- *Special ed is not included in sex education – Arizona*
- *Massachusetts: it's still not mandatory to provide sexual education*
- *(Participant who works with children) children don't get that critical education, so by the time they become an adult, most people with disabilities have experienced sexual assault, sometimes even more than once. Have to come in prepared for that history and have to do a lot of work not only for the individuals but we also need to hold each other accountable.*
 - *We need to be having those conversations with mandated reporters and with people with disabilities*
 - *By the time people get to training programs as an adult, they have already in many cases been traumatized, and not many understand/expect that.*
- *Financial barriers: not having enough funding to expand programs, even the ones we know work well, the funding isn't there*
 - *Funding issues, we were funded since 2008, but our funding is ending, so we are limited to prep funding, meaning we are restricted by legislative orders, having to exclude information about LGBTQ+ identities from our curriculum*
- *LEAP project in Virginia funding comes from department of behavioral health and developmental services (large state agency) and are very fortunate to have the funding we do have*
 - *When we are serving statewide, it's a drop in the bucket of who can benefit.*
 - *Thinking outside of the box a bit, providing webinars*



- *The curriculum is designed specifically for people with DD*
 - *Diagnostic overshadowing - signs of abuse might be attributed to the person's disability and concerns of abuse not taken seriously*
3. How can DV/SA service providers make their services more accessible to individuals with disabilities?
 4. What information do other professionals need in order to support people with disabilities in crisis situations?

*We ran out of time to talk about the last two Community Questions in this session, so we would love to hear from you! Please send your responses to **mindy.dokos@usu.edu**!