



Association of Regional Center Agencies Consumer Social/Sexual Planning Statement

Rationale:

The social/sexual needs of individuals with developmental disabilities are a sensitive and delicate matter, which affects their parents, advocates and people who provide services and supports.

The sensitive nature of this topic may have inhibited the development of rational and objective outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities including their programs and supports. The consequence has been an overprotective concern for the social/sexual development of such individuals and in many cases a complete avoidance of the subject.

Purpose:

The intent of this policy statement is to incorporate social/sexual related goals and outcomes into the Person Centered Planning process and assist service coordinators with the education and support they will need to help consumers identify their needs on the Individual Program Plan.

Statement:

Among the fundamental rights individuals with developmental disabilities share with all other individuals are the rights to privacy and social/sexual expression. Individuals with developmental disabilities have the right to receive information and training that gives them the tools needed to live a safe, secure and socially expressive life. As a means of preventing problems and fostering quality of life, we have a responsibility and duty to ensure that planning involves social and sexual outcomes of learning to protect oneself from unwanted social/sexual activity, including an opportunity to learn to follow safe sex practices. Assistance to individuals with developmental disabilities should be at a level consistent with their ability to accept responsibility and give informed consent.

Every individual with a developmental disability has the right to achieve his/her maximum potential on the continuum of social/sexual development including:

- The right to privacy.
- The opportunity to develop socially and sexually.
- Education about sexuality.
- Access to a clinical support surrounding issues of sexuality specific to individuals with developmental disabilities.
- The opportunity to develop friendships and intimacy.
- The right to be given information about birth control options and to choose or refuse abstinence, contraception and/or sterilization.
- The right to choose marriage.

- The right to sexual relationships with other consenting adults.
- The choice to bear and rear children.
- Access to supportive services that foster independent living including parenting.
- The right to be informed about these rights and opportunities as well as the responsibilities that go with them.

Therefore, Regional Centers are committed to providing support and education to consumers, families, providers and the community surrounding the issues of social/sexual expression of individuals with developmental disabilities.

(Approved June 15, 2002, by the ARCA Board of Directors)