

# CAPACITY TO LOVE

*Respecting the Rights of Adults with Developmental Disabilities*



*Capacity to Love* is a [project](#) focusing on the social and sexual rights and responsibilities of adults with developmental disabilities, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes adults living alone or who live with a roommate, spouse or family members; those living under an order of guardianship; and those living in licensed settings such as group residences.

Love has many dimensions. Everyone, including adults with developmental disabilities, has a capacity to love – whether it is in a family relationship, friendship, romance, sexual relationship, or marriage. The right of adults to express love through consenting social or sexual interactions is constitutionally protected. Restrictions on freedom of association should be narrowly tailored to meet a compelling state interest.

*Capacity to Love* promotes the education and counseling of adults with developmental disabilities about their social and sexual rights and responsibilities. It also promotes the education of guardians, court-appointed lawyers, care providers, and adult protective service workers of their duty to respect these rights – appropriately considering the interests of such adults in both freedom of choice and freedom from abuse.

*Capacity to Love* is operated by Spectrum Institute in cooperation with the Alternatives to Guardianship Project. It evaluates existing sex education curricula and classes in Missouri to determine whether they are adequately informing teens and young adults with developmental disabilities of their sexual rights and responsibilities. It also evaluates whether supported

decision-making services are addressing the sensitive area of sexual rights and responsibilities.

Without proper education, counseling, and support, adults with developmental disabilities are at risk of becoming victims of abuse. They may also be at risk of becoming unwitting offenders because they have not been sufficiently educated or counseled about “the rules of sex.”

*Capacity to Love* welcomes input from self-advocates and their supporters, educators, counselors, and service providers, as well as disability and LGBT advocacy and service organizations. Together we can help ensure that adults with developmental disabilities can safely exercise and enjoy their capacity to love.

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<https://spectruminstitute.org/>  
<https://alternativestoguardianship.com/>



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The goals and functions of the *Capacity to Love* Project align with policy statements on sexuality and developmental disabilities approved by [AAIDD & The Arc](#) as well as [TASH](#).