ROLE OF CAREGIVERS IN HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Note Taking Guide

At the end of this training, you will be able to:

1. Describe what child should know at various ages about sexual issues
2. List criteria to consider when assessing sexual behavior of children as usual and expected sexual development or behaviors that should cause concern
3. Discuss how you can promote a supportive and safe environment that encourages healthy sexual development
4. Identify strategies to address sexual behaviors that support health sexual development

Role of Caregivers

Caregivers can promote healthy sexual behavior by:

- Being a primary educator
- Being aware of hidden questions
- Finding teachable moments
- Listening for hidden questions
- Providing opportunities to develop and learn
- Providing facts with feelings and values
- Not waiting for questions
- Being “ask-able”
## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHOULD KNOW:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Age Five</th>
<th>School Age</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
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### Four-Step Process for Responding to Questions about Sex and Sexuality

1. Normalize *(That’s a really good question)* and validate *(What makes you ask me this question today?)*:
2. Ask what they think the answer is:
3. Answer honestly and include values:
4. Check for understanding:
When Sexual Behaviors Cause Concern

Characteristics of usual and expected sexual behaviors of children and youth:
- Exploratory
- Occurs by mutual agreement
- Balanced with other aspects of their lives
- Periodic, not compulsive
- Typically involves children similar in age, size, development and know to each other
- Responds to intervention and rules
- (Friedrich, 2007; Gil and Shaw, 2014; NCSBY 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOR</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD VULNERABILITY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental or verbal delays</td>
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<td>• Impulse control problems</td>
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<td>• Poor social competence</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY ADVERSITY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of supervision and guidance</td>
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<td>• Stress and trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Parental depression and substance abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A MODELING OF COERCION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Physical Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Domestic violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Violence in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A MODELING OF SEXUALITY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sexual Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Poor boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sexualized environment</td>
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Characteristics of Sexual Behaviors that are Problematic
1. Occurs with high frequency
2. Interferes with social/cognitive development
3. Coercion, intimidation, or force
4. Associated with strong emotional reaction – anger or anxiety
5. Significant size, age, developmental, or status differences
6. Repeatedly occurs despite caregiver intervention
7. Prompts complaints from other children
8. Causes pain or injury

(Friedrich, 2007; Gil and Shaw, 2014; NCSBY 2012)
Managing Sexual Behaviors

Similar to managing other behaviors, sexual behaviors that might be cause for concern will stop if:
1. Told the rules
2. Mildly restricted
3. Well supervised
4. Praised for appropriate behavior

Strategies:
- Be good caregivers
- Be calm but firm
- Make messages explicit
- Teach, support, and reinforce
- Monitor
- Create a non-sexualized environment
- Observe and make patterns obvious
- Share with caseworker

“With help children can overcome their sexual behavior problems.”
Reflection Questions

1. Based on what you learned today, what factors could cause a child to display sexual behavior problems?

2. What can you do today to help make your house safe for children with sexual behavior problems?

3. This course encouraged caregivers to promote healthy sexual development by being “ask-able”. What steps do you need to take to accomplish that task?
Resources and Recommended Websites

Sexuality Education

*Parent’s Sex Ed Center (Advocates for Youth)* is a web site that provides expert advice for parents to communicate accurately with their children about sexuality and sexual topics.  
http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/parents-sex-ed-center-home

*Families are Talking* is a SIECUS newsletter series written for parents and caregivers. The 12 issues of the newsletter are designed to give parents/caregivers encouragement and support in talking with their children about sexuality. Each issue is available in English and Spanish.  
http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=632&nodeID=1

Managing Sexual Behavior

*Understanding and Coping with Sexual behavior Problems in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers* is a resource developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. This document outlines basic information about child hood sexual behavior problems, potential causes, and treatment options.  
http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/sexualbehaviorproblems.pdf

*Child Sexual Development* is a website by National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY) that provides a good overview of normal sexual development in children and youth. The site also provides information on sexual behaviors that cause concern, along with recommendations for responding to sexual behavior.  
http://www.ncsby.org/content/childhood-sexual-development

*What Happens Now: Facing Sexual Behavior problems with Your Child* is a fact sheet intended for caregivers of children and youth with problematic sexual behaviors, with guidance on the how caregivers can help their children and answers to pressing questions caregivers and family members may have.  
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Common Questions

Pre-School
How do babies get in your tummy?
What’s that? (pointing to a woman’s breast, or other body parts.)
How come I have a penis and you don’t?
What is a …tampon? condom? birth control patch? (or other object they might come across)
Why do girls look different than boys?

Elementary School
Is it okay to touch yourself?
Does it hurt to have a baby?
How do people get AIDS?
How do animals do it?
When will I be able to shave?
Why does so-and-so only have a mommy (or daddy)?
Why does so-and-so have two mommies (or daddies)?
Where does the baby come from?
Do boys have periods?
What does “gay” mean?
What kind of birth control do you use?

Junior High/Middle School
How does a man’s seed get into a woman?
How do people know how to do “it”?
How do you know when puberty is over?
Can a guy ejaculate without really knowing it?
How old should you be to have sex?
Is abortion okay?
How big will my breasts get?
Is it true that a girl can’t get pregnant the first time she has sex?
Can a girl get pregnant before she’s 16?
Can a woman get pregnant if she’s a lesbian?
How do you learn how to kiss?

High School
What’s the best birth control method?
Should people have sex if they’re in love?
How do you get the pill?
What would you think if I got pregnant?
How do you know when you’re in love?
Is it true that boys need to have sex more than girls?
Is abortion wrong?
Is it true that the pill causes cancer?
Do old people still have sex?
Can you get AIDS from making out with someone?
At what age do you think it’s best to have children?
Does it hurt to lose your virginity?
## ROLE OF CAREGIVERS IN HEALTHY SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

### Items from the Child Sexual Behavior Inventory*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No. (Abbreviated)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dresses like opposite sex</td>
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<td>2. Stands too close</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Wants to be opposite sex</td>
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<td>4. Touches sex parts in public</td>
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<td>5. Masturbates with hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Draws sex parts</td>
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<td>7. Touches breasts</td>
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<td>8. Masturbates with toy/object</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Touches other child’s sex parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Tries to have intercourse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Puts mouth on sex parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Touches sex parts at home</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Touches adult’s sex parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Touches animal’s sex parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Makes sexual sounds</td>
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<td>16. Asks others to do sex acts</td>
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<td>17. Rubs body against people</td>
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<td>18. Puts objects in vagina/rectum</td>
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<td>19. Tries to look at people when they are nude</td>
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<td>20. Pretends toys are having sex</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Shows sex parts to adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Tries to look at pictures of nude people</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Talks about sex acts</td>
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<td>24. Kisses adults not known well</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Gets upset when adults kiss</td>
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<td>26. Overly friendly with men</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Kisses other children</td>
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<td>28. Talks flirtatiously</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Undresses other children</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Wants to watch TV nudity</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Puts tongue in mouth when kissing</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Hugs adults not known well</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Shows sex parts to children</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Undresses adults against their will</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. Very interested in opposite sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Puts mouth on breasts</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Knows more about sex</td>
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<td>38. Other sexual behaviors</td>
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(The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/101/4/e9)
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Normal vs. Problematic Sexual Behavior Case Examples

1. Mike is a nine-year-old boy in foster care. He was recently removed from his home due to neglect. Both of his parents abused crack cocaine and the climate of their home was very permissive. The foster parents are very concerned about Mike touching adults in private areas. When guests or other family members come to visit, Mike, despite being told not to on numerous occasions, has a tendency to approach them and touch the breasts of women or the genitals of men.

   _Usual and expected_  _Of Concern_

   Possible Explanation:

2. A preschool teacher becomes very frustrated and concerned when your three-year-old new foster child refuses to take a nap and instead quietly proceeds to put his hand inside the diapers of other sleeping children. He becomes surprised and annoyed when the teacher places him back in his cot, and after several attempts to repeat this behavior he masturbates himself to sleep.

   _Usual and expected_  _Of Concern_

   Possible Explanation:

3. Lisa is a twelve-year-old girl who was recently placed in foster care. Her foster parents were shocked and uncertain about what to do when they found Lisa and another twelve-year-old unclothed and in a bed together. It appeared as though Lisa’s mouth was on the other girl's breast.

   _Usual and expected_  _Of Concern_

   Possible Explanation:
4. A nine-year-old foster child causes great alarm when several of her girlfriends report that when they go to the bathroom with her, she shows them her breast and wants everyone to show theirs. Sometimes she offers one or two dollars if friends will let her touch their breasts.*

| Usual and expected | Of Concern |

Possible Explanation:

5. Two four-year-olds are playing doctor, and when the foster mother enters the room they yell at her to leave, saying they are doing “private things.” The mother notices both children have disrobed down to their underwear.*

| Usual and expected | Of Concern |

Possible Explanation:

6. The grandmother of six-year-old Sarah walked into the bathroom and saw Sarah on the floor with the handle of her toothbrush either between her labia or in her vagina – she wasn’t sure.

| Usual and expected | Of Concern |

Possible Explanation:

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Worksheet for Responding

Situation One

What is your goal – what message do you want to teach?

What words would you use to respond to this child?

Situation Two

What is your goal – what message do you want to teach?

What words would you use to respond to this child?

Situations to Practice

- When you walk into Michael’s (age 14) room to see why he did not respond to your calling him to dinner, you see him standing in front of a mirror masturbating.
- While bathing a four- and five-year-old, you hear one ask the other, “Pat and hold on to my penis – it’s fun!”
- You walk into the TV room and see a fifteen-year-old kissing a friend.
- When an eight-year-old cousin comes over to play, you walk into the room and see one of your children laying on top of her and rubbing and humping against her pelvis.
- When at grandma’s for dinner Rodney (age 10) is overheard telling a sexually explicit joke to another child.
- At a church gathering, a close family friend uncomfortably tells you that one of your children has been touching and rubbing up against the breasts of several women.
- Six-year-old Tamika comes nude out of the bathroom after her shower.