

Bethany, signing:

Raising sexually healthy children requires a combination of strong relationships, open communication and clear messages regarding values and expectations between parent/caregiver and child.

A parent having conversation with a child:

“What? You can wear a dress too! Do you want to?”

Two parents talking, “He laughed and seemed unsure. I went to him and asked if he feels comfortable wearing a dress, and he said 'Sure, I'm cool with that.'”

Bethany, signing:

It may feel like a daunting task for many parents, especially if one has a Deaf child who communicates in a different language such as American Sign Language.

However, if given the information, tools and support you need, you can integrate this role as your child's primary sexuality educator, into your daily life with more comfort, confidence and courage.

It's that easy.

We are here to support you with your role as a parent/caregiver.

Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and Hard of Hearing students are lacking access to language and face communication barriers. This has a long-lasting impact on their holistic well being, including their sexual health.

Many Deaf students arrive at school with significant language delays that can greatly impact the rest of their education, including sexuality education.

As a result, many students experience struggles in learning and understanding about their bodies and sexualities.

Sexuality education is a human right. Unfortunately, access to comprehensive sexual health education is often not readily available to Deaf communities. By having language access and being connected with your child your child will have a higher chance of making healthy decisions about sex, sexuality and relationships. Here are some guiding principles to remember as you navigate through your journey as a sexuality educator for your Deaf child. People experience and express themselves as sexual beings throughout their lives from the beginning as infants, including people with disability and Deaf folks. Learning about sexuality is an ongoing, life-long process. Children of all ages and abilities who have accurate, developmentally appropriate information about sex, sexuality and relationships are more likely to make healthy decisions. In the course of daily living, every family teaches their children about sex, sexuality and relationships through spoken (signed) and unspoken messages and behaviors. You have the power of influence, believe it or not.

As parents and caregivers, we all come from different backgrounds with different beliefs, values, knowledge and skills. Yet, we all have the same goal: we all want our children to be safe and healthy. Children who understand their family's values and expectations

regarding sexual health are more likely to make behavior choices consistent with those values. Prevention of sexual violence requires a multifaceted approach, including teaching our children how to recognize, form and nurture healthy relationships. It is vitally important that we, as responsible caring adults, address the messages our children receive by sharing our values and giving them accurate information and tools they need to make responsible decisions. Sex education happens whether we work at it or not. Where else will our children learn about their sexuality if not from you, as their parent(s) or caregiver(s)? From who? Social Media? Movies? TV? Friends? Do they follow the same values as yours?

A child talking with their parent:

“Hmm... this one!”

Their parent responding, “Alright!!”

Jakiya, signing:

Hi! I'm Jakiya, here's my sign name. Welcome to our mini ASL lessons!

I'm excited to teach you some signs today regarding boundaries and consent! In this lesson, we will learn signs that will foster your child's ability to advocate for themselves by expressing their wants and needs as you both navigate through establishing healthy boundaries. Are you ready to learn with us? It's that easy! You got this!