CHECKLIST FOR ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

"INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE."

Martin Luther King Jr.

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Introduction to Disability and Sex Education

People with disabilities make up the world's largest minority. According to the World Health Organization, around 15 percent of the world's population lives with disabilities. Of the 62 million children in the United States who are under age 15, nearly 10 percent have a disability. Across the lifespan, everyone is likely to become temporarily or permanently disabled in some way at some point.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines disability as "any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)." Disability can impact vision, hearing, movement, thinking, memory, learning, communication, mental health and social relationships.

People with disabilities are a diverse group with a wide range of needs. Two people with the same disability can be affected in different ways. Some disabilities may be easy to see while other disabilities may be invisible. Regardless of visibility, disabilities can be easily managed or complex, and individual experiences with disability can change over time for many different reasons.

Students with disabilities are less likely to receive sex education than students who do not have disabilities. Among students with disabilities who do receive formal sex education, people with disabilities are often not represented or accommodated within sexuality education curricula. While some students with disabilities may have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan to define disability accommodations that must be provided by law, legal compliance is only a starting point for access and equity. Frequent exclusion from sex education and a lack of support in the classroom contributes to the increased risks and harmful beliefs that impact the disability community.

Unfortunately, disability increases vulnerability to violence and marginalization. According to a 2018 publication from the Office of Victims of Crime, people with disabilities are 2-3 times more likely to experience violent victimization, which includes sexual assault and rape.

While many people believe myths about the relationship between disability and sexuality, disability does not inherently take away from a person's sexuality or romantic interests. People with disabilities can identify with any gender or sexual orientation. People with disabilities can be great partners as well as parents. The goal of this resource is to support educators to better meet the needs of all students regardless of ability to help all young people live their best life for a lifetime.

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For more information and further resources for each section, please go to pages 3 - 10

Is the learning environment accessible?

- ☐ Does the physical space allow for easy navigation for students with disabilities?
- ☐ Does the environment support students with sensitivities to lights, sounds and smells?
- ☐ Do I use disability etiquette within and outside of class sessions?
- ☐ Do I set expectations for behavior and communication that support students with disabilities?

Is the lesson structure accessible?

- ☐ Do I use Universal Design for Learning in creating lessons?
- ☐ Do I use the POUR Principles in creating e-learning lessons?
- ☐ Do I use Trauma-Informed Practices in lessons?
- ☐ Do I share a word list before lessons to allow students to prepare in advance?
- ☐ Do I offer flexibility or breaks in lessons to support special movement, nutrition, hydration, restroom or other self-care needs?

Are the handouts and written materials accessible?

- ☐ Do I include plain language text as well as images in handouts and written materials?
- ☐ Do I use an accessible layout for handouts and written materials?
- ☐ Do I use accessible font types and sizes in handouts and written materials?
- ☐ Do I use color contrasts that support accessibility?
- ☐ Do I include image descriptions or alternative ("alt") text?

Are the videos accessible?

- ☐ Do I include captions that have been checked for accuracy with videos?
- ☐ Do I include audio descriptions with videos?
- ☐ Do I provide transcripts or notes to make sure that no content is missed?

Are the activities and games accessible?

- ☐ Do I give instructions clearly and in multiple ways for all students to understand?
- ☐ Do I use activities and games that allow for flexible timing and flexible responses?
- ☐ Do I provide materials that will be easy for students to use?
- ☐ Do I have adaptations or alternatives for activities or games that involve movement?
- ☐ Am I able to monitor or adjust visuals and sound levels during activities and games?
- ☐ Do I use activities and games that allow for different roles (i.e. scribe, speaker, record keeper, etc.) for all students to participate according to their strengths?
- ☐ If using virtual activities and/or games, do I consider the accessibility of the technology?

Is the web content accessible?

- ☐ Are websites compatible with screen readers and other assistive technology software?
- ☐ Do websites have easy to understand graphics, easy to understand instructions and accessible navigation options?
- ☐ Do websites have user controls for text size, volume and visuals or sound effects?
- ☐ Are online forms/surveys and links accessible?

Is the representation inclusive?

- ☐ Do I show representation of different types of disabilities in images and videos?
- ☐ Do I include disability-related considerations (fatigue, pain, scars, sensory sensitivity, etc.) in lesson prompts?
- ☐ Do I promote messages that support people with disabilities?

Are the condom demonstrations accessible?

- ☐ Do I clearly label and separate latex materials from non-latex materials?
- ☐ Do I offer a flexible amount of time for student practice?
- ☐ Do I offer extra condoms for student practice?
- ☐ If a student needs assistance with condom application, do I support students to identify ways to communicate with a partner and/or adapt methods safely?

Further Information and Resources

- For more information and further resources about making the learning environment accessible, please see page 5 below.
- For more information and further resources about making the lesson structure accessible, please go to page 6.
- For more information and further resources about making handouts accessible, please go to page 7.
- For more information and further resources about making videos accessible, please go to page 8.
- For more information and further resources about making activities and games accessible, please go to page 9.
- For more information and further resources about making web content accessible, please go to page 10.
- For more information and further resources about disability-inclusive representation, please go to page 10.
- For more information and further resources about making condom demonstrations accessible, please go to page 12.

Make the Learning Environment Accessible

Ensure that the entire room or building is accessible, so all people can easily navigate their way to bathrooms and get access to their personal belongings. Some students may use accessible furniture (i.e. wheelchair-accessible desks, special seating), adaptive devices (i.e. note taking devices, hearing aids/cochlear implants), support people (such as aides or interpreters), or service animals. Be mindful that elements of the learning environment, such as seating arrangements, may need to be adjusted to properly accommodate different types of access support.

Be aware of noise levels, lighting and physical position in the room to ensure that all students can hear and see all content to the fullest extent possible. Maintain a scent-free environment as smells can trigger severe allergic reactions or migraines in people with scent-sensitivities.

Set expectations for the learning environment that support access. For example, expectations like "raise your hand before speaking" and "one speaker at a time" can help to focus attention when a

person is speaking. These expectations ensure that someone who is hard of hearing or has learning disabilities like ADHD/ADD is able to better focus on the question and subsequent answer.

Tell students when and how to best communicate with you regarding any access needs or concerns and ask them in turn the best way to communicate with them.

Make the Lesson Structure Accessible

Universal Design for Learning is an educational approach that aims to support the needs and abilities of all learners. Principles of UDL can help to eliminate unnecessary obstacles to teaching and learning.

- For a 3-minute video explanation of UDL from the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability in Ireland, please click the following link, [What is Universal Design for Learning (UDL)?](#) If you live in the United States or its territories, please keep in mind that some suggestions may be country-specific.
- For a 3-page PDF guide to UDL that includes additional resources from a branch of the United States Department of Education, please click the following link, [Universal Design for Learning](#)

The POUR principles, which are Perceivable, Operational, Understandable and Robust, define four qualities of an accessible experience when lessons are designed to be delivered online. The POUR principles are also the foundation of the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)](#). WCAG is an international standard for making web content accessible.

- For more information from the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials regarding each of the specific principles and ways to include them in lessons, please click the following link, [Designing for Accessibility with POUR](#)
- For more information on conducting and presenting at virtual meetings, please click the following link, [Accessible Meetings, Events & Conferences Guide | ADA Hospitality](#)

Trauma-Informed practices are part of a larger approach of Trauma-Informed Care that recognizes the role that trauma can play in a person's life. Trauma-informed practices are based on five guiding principles, which are safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment. Trauma-informed practices do not treat symptoms of trauma but offer ways to provide supportive services for all people regardless of background.

- A trauma-informed practice in sex education would be to provide a list of unfamiliar or difficult terms in advance, so that students can prepare and have a reference for later review. Sharing a word list in advance can help many students, including students who need support with communication and students who experience anxiety from not knowing what to expect.

Plan to support students who need to take breaks during lessons for movement, nutrition, hydration or restroom needs. Do your best to be flexible with the timing for activities and allow extra time to complete tasks and communicate ideas. Allow for breaks to support self-care as sexual health education can be overwhelming and triggering for some students.

- For more information on trauma-informed support and self-care for students in sex education, please click the following link, Guide to Trauma-Informed Sex Education - Cardea Services

Make Handouts and Written Materials Accessible

When creating handouts and written materials, include text and images. Make sure to use plain language, so that students can understand information as easily as possible.

- For more information on how to use plain language in creating handouts, please click the following link, A Plain-Language Checklist for Reviewing Your Document

Consider the accessibility of fonts, color schemes/contrasts and image descriptions through alt text.

- For more information from the University of North Carolina on the fonts and colors to use during document creation, as well as best practices for creating image descriptions (also known as alternative "alt" text), please click the following link, Making Design Accessible: Fonts, Color Contrast, and Alt Text
- For more information from Perkins School for the Blind on what to include when writing alt text and image descriptions, please click the following link, How to Write Alt Text and Image Descriptions for the visually impaired | Paths to Technology | Perkins eLearning.
- For more information on accessible fonts from the perspective of a college student with a visual impairment, please click the following link, My Eight Favorite Free Fonts for Print Disabilities | Paths to Technology | Perkins eLearning.

Please note that best practice is to utilize accessibility recommendations from people with disabilities, whether from an organization that employs many individuals with disabilities or an individual that has a disability. Keep in mind that individual access preferences may vary from person to person.

Consider accessibility in the layout and style of written material

- For more information on preparing word documents and printed forms or flyers to be accessible to people with visual impairments, please click the following link, [Preparing documents for visually impaired people - Macular Society](#)
- For information on preparing word documents to be accessible for students with dyslexia, please click the following link, [Dyslexia friendly style guide](#). Keep in mind that the Dyslexia friendly style guide was made by the British Dyslexia Association, so if you live in the United States or its territories, some suggestions may be country-specific.
- For information on creating accessible digital media (social media, infographics, surveys and email communication) as well as accessible documents of different types (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Google Docs, Google Slides and PDF formats), please click the following link, [Digital Media and Documents | California State University, Northridge](#)
- For information on creating accessible online forms, please click the following link, [Best Practices for Accessible Forms | California State University, Northridge](#)
- For more information on creating accessible websites from the Web Accessibility Initiative, please click the following link, [Designing for Web Accessibility – Tips for Getting Started](#)

Make Videos Accessible

When showing or posting videos, include audio descriptions and captions to facilitate access. Audio captions are essential to understanding the visual information being provided in a video (such as context clues, description of scenes taking place, etc.). Closed captioning is essential to understanding the auditory information (dialogue, music, background noises, etc.) that are in a video.

Automatic closed captioning (on platforms such as YouTube or Zoom) or automatic transcription services (such as services like Temi) can contain mistakes. Mistakes are more likely to occur when using slang, multiple languages and names that may not be common or familiar.

A best practice is to review videos in advance to ensure that captioning and/or transcripts are accurate. You may also wish to provide students with transcripts or notes to ensure that no content is missed or miscommunicated.

- For more information from the University of Washington on how to add captions and audio descriptions to videos as well as create transcripts and choose an accessible media player, please click the following link, [Creating Accessible Videos](#)

Make Activities and Games Accessible

Games and other interactive activities can be greats way to engage student interest and/or provide choices for how students demonstrate what they have learned. Provide instructions for each activity as clearly as possible through multiple methods (i.e. both verbal and text formats, and consider using images when possible).

Give all instructions and take questions before starting independent or group work to limit distractions and the need to multitask, which could be difficult for some students. For example, students who use a sign language interpreter may need to look up to watch instructions be given, so giving instructions before starting activities minimizes the chance for missing key information. When giving verbal instruction, remember to be mindful of physical position in the room. When sharing instruction in text, use font type, font size, colors and graphics on all written or visual content to maximize clarity and accessibility for all students.

Hands-on elements should be selected with consideration for weight, shape, size and texture that can impact accessibility. Lights and sounds that are part of a game (i.e. buzzers or lights flashing on and off) may be a challenge for students with disabilities, so make sure that you can control the volume and/or background special effects as needed. If the classroom becomes very loud during a game, accommodate students who may need support, by allowing them to take breaks when needed, or set a maximum volume for the classroom and actively monitor the sound level.

When assigning work in small groups, incorporate different roles that utilize different skills (i.e. one person is a speaker, one person is a scribe) to allow students with disabilities to adopt a role that best suits their personal strengths.

If activities or games involve moving around the space, consider other options or formats that may be more accessible to students with limited mobility. Online tools and games can be a good alternative, and websites like [Mentimeter](#), [PollEverywhere](#) and [Kahoot](#) can be useful tools to facilitate student engagement in different ways. Keep in mind that technology may require the use of multiple screens, which can be a challenge for some students with disabilities.

Regardless of format, avoid games that involve strict time limits. Strict time limits may be less accessible to students with disabilities who may need extra time to process information and/ or express responses.

Make Web Content Accessible

While technology can reduce access barriers, it can also introduce new barriers, so make sure that technology use is inclusive of all students. When using online tools or games, be mindful of the possible visuals, sounds, and time constraints involved to be able to maintain access.

When creating or using online lessons, remember the POUR principles that were discussed on page 4 as standards for defining an accessible online learning experience. If you are delivering online presentations, you may wish to review the guidance for conducting and presenting at virtual meetings from page 5. If you are sharing links, posting content online or creating online content and forms, please review the relevant resources from page 6.

Check written and visual materials as well as any game or activity platforms for accessibility before use to ensure they are compatible with access needs and accessibility-related software (i.e. speech-to-text, text-to-speech, screen readers, etc.). Ensure that platforms contain appropriate user controls for navigation and multimedia content. Some people cannot use a mouse, so if needed, be mindful to use websites that can be navigated via the keyboard.

- For more information from the University of North Carolina on checking content including web-based and third-party content for accessibility, please click the following link, [Checking for Accessibility](#)

Make Representation Inclusive

Representation allows students to connect in a more meaningful way with the reality that disability exists. Seeing people with disabilities represented in posters, media, television, movies, TV shows, etc. increases a sense of belonging and reinforces the fact that people with disabilities exist and thrive. Positive representation of disability is important in all aspects of life, but especially in spaces where people with disabilities are often excluded, such as sexuality and relationships.

Include representation of people with a variety of different types of disabilities in visual content and lesson prompts.

- For royalty-free stock photos of people with disabilities, please click the following link, [Disability Collective by Getty Images](#)
- To learn more about some disabled experiences, many disabled creators on YouTube post content about dating, sexuality, parenting and relationships. https://www.youtube.com/hannahwitton Some disabled creators include [Hannah Witton](#), [Jessica Kellgren-Fozard](#), [Molly Burke](#), [Cole and Charisma](#) and [Shane and Hannah](#). YouTube content creators represent a small fraction of people with disabilities and disabled experiences. These suggestions are simply intended to be a start to learning more about disability. Review all videos before showing them to students to ensure that you are following your school or organization's expectations for appropriate content.

Modify examples in role play and story prompts to incorporate characters with a variety of disabilities in different scenarios. Recognize that concerns about pain, scars, fatigue, sensory sensitivity or language difficulties may be particularly relevant to people with disabilities, but people without disabilities may experience them sometimes too. Include these concerns in role plays and story prompts to support all students in thinking about how disability relates to sex education.

Emphasize inclusive messages about the diversity of ways people experience positive relationships and sexuality. Please note that "relationships" and "sex" can be changed to "friendships" to better match the needs of younger students. Inclusive messages may include:

> ➢ "Relationships can mean different things to different people"
> ➢ "People can feel attracted to each other for many different reasons"
> ➢ "Sex can mean different things to different people"
> ➢ "There are many different ways to have sex"
> ➢ "There are many different ways to be a parent"
> ➢ "Everyone deserves to feel safe and supported - in relationships and healthcare"

Expand messages about safety and respect to include the needs of students with disabilities. For example, when talking about respecting people's personal boundaries, include respect for disability-related supports such as a wheelchair, special technology, or service animals.

Role-plays can also help students develop strategies to self-advocate when reaching out to a clinic. While people with disabilities may struggle to find accessible sexual health services, provide guidance on self-advocacy when seeking healthcare. A list of questions to ask as well as suggestions for how

to communicate their sexual healthcare needs regarding their disability might be helpful. Sample questions may include:

> ➢ How will I be able to best access the building with my personal mobility devices?
> ➢ Does the office have an accessible restroom or changing area?
> ➢ Is enough time scheduled in appointments to accommodate communication access?
> ➢ Can written materials be provided in Braille or large print?
> ➢ Will my support person be welcome during appointments?
> ➢ Does blood work or imaging require a separate appointment at another location?

- For more information on supports that may help people with disabilities when seeking healthcare, please click the following link, Frequently Asked Questions About Disability Resources | UPMC.

Make Condom Demonstrations Accessible

Be aware that some individuals may have latex allergy, which can be a serious health concern. If a young person is not sure what you mean when you ask about latex allergy, you can ask if the doctor has to use special gloves or can't use gloves at all during a visit.

To make sure that there is no opportunity for someone to have an allergic reaction, make sure to have non-latex supplies available and stored separately from latex materials with multiple types of indicators (written instruction, a visual cue on the container or area, and something that has texture).

- Keep latex condoms in a closed container that has the words "LATEX CONDOMS" on it, as well as large red pompoms attached to the top of the container. This ensures that someone with a visual disability can feel the difference on the box and would know not to open it. It ensures someone who can't read or has dyslexia knows to look for the red color – as red traditionally means stop in the United States.

Applying a condom correctly is a skill that takes time and practice to learn. Do your best to be flexible with the amount of time in lessons for student practice and have extra condoms available for multiple attempts. Recognize that some students may need assistance to open, apply and/or dispose of a condom correctly. Support students to identify ways to communicate with a partner regarding any assistance needs and/or to adapt their method for condom use safely.

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Ashira Greenberg (she/her/hers) graduated with her Master of Public Health from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Following her graduation from Columbia University, Ashira also received CHES certification. Ashira is passionate about child, youth and family health with an interest in improving healthcare and educational experiences for all young people. Ashira is especially committed to advocacy and health promotion on behalf of youth with physical disabilities, chronic illness and complex health needs. Ashira has been involved in a variety of advocacy-related efforts as part of her local disability community for over 10 years.

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Rachel Kaplan (she/her) is the founder of Kintsugi Consulting, LLC with a focus on providing training and consultation related to disability inclusion, education, accessibility, and representation. Rachel holds a Master's in Public Health and Graduate Certificate in Drug and Addiction Studies from the University of South Carolina. She has extensive experience working with the homeless population, youth services and youth programming, youth with disabilities, sexuality health education, mental health awareness, suicide prevention, wellness programming, crisis intervention, and sexual assault and domestic violence advocacy. Rachel has almost 15 years of experience working with youth, adolescents, and adults with various disabilities, as well as personal experience as a person with a disability.