



# **Sexuality and Disabilities: A Guide for Human Service Practitioners (Monograph Published Simultaneously As the Journal of Social Work & Human Sexuality , Vol 8, No 2)**

*Deborah P Valentine, Romel W Mackelprang*

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Individuals with disabilities are often “desexualized” in our society, yet they have the same need for intimacy, self-worth, and social belonging as people without disabilities. Sexuality and Disabilities addresses persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and cognitive disabilities and their concerns in the areas of intimacy, family issues, sexuality, and sexual functioning. It offers suggestions for professionals who work with persons with these disabilities to help them work more competently with disabled persons in the sexuality arena. These concrete ideas are excellent for staff training and education and for enhancing professional development for those working with persons with physical disabilities. The contributing authors create an awareness that all people need individualized consideration and that the special needs of all individuals are important, especially for those who may have previously been left to discover things on their own--usually unsuccessfully. Sexuality and Disabilities focuses on a wide range of disabilities, including physical, developmental, and learning disabilities, mental retardation, and conditions that may have an impact on people later in life such as strokes, heart disease, or other chronic illness. Chapters discuss education and support issues for both practitioners and clients. Some of the topics examined include:

- components of a staff training program on sexuality and disability
  - specific recommendations for sexuality education and counseling with people with spinal cord injuries and other acquired severe neurological disabilities
  - a program model serving parents with mental retardation and their children
  - specific ways educational programming, social work intervention, and policy efforts can address the special learning needs of people with cognitive impairments
  - sources of support and stress for families caring for developmentally disabled children
  - an analysis of special vulnerabilities and challenges relating to sexual victimization that confront people with disabilities
- An extremely helpful tool for human service practitioners, Sexuality and Disabilities is also a valuable resource for graduate and undergraduate students who have an interest in working with people with physical, cognitive, or mental disabilities and helping them explore this basic facet of their lives.

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