



Overview

Summary

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are harmed by sexual assault more often than others. They are usually harmed by someone they know. This can include family members, other people with IDD, and support staff. Consent is critical in all relationships. People with IDD often understand the idea of consent. But some things make it more confusing.

- Consent looks different across relationships. The need to express consent may be clear with unfamiliar people. But the better we know someone, the more confusing consent can be.
- Many people believe that consent cannot be taken back. They need to know that consent can be taken back or changed at any time.
- People with IDD are taught to be compliant. This is especially true in caregiving relationships. They may struggle to understand that they are allowed to give or withhold consent.
- People with IDD have different ways of communicating. Some people may not use words. They can still give or withhold consent.

To prevent assault/abuse, we must teach consent in all contexts. People with IDD must have power over their bodies, even if it feels inconvenient to those caring for them. People must be able to give or withhold consent using their ways of communicating.

You can use this toolkit in many ways.

- You can self-pace through its contents to learn on your own.
- Teams can work together in person or remotely for staff development.
- You can share the videos and activities with the self-advocates you work with.



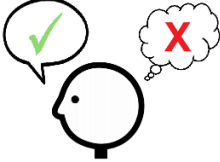
Vocabulary

Share these words, pictures, and definitions before you begin working with others. Make sure everyone understands what they mean. Revisit the vocabulary before you start each module.

Word	Picture	Definition
Consent	Two stylized human heads in profile facing each other. Above the left head is a speech bubble containing a smiling face with hearts. Above the right head is a speech bubble containing two hands shaking.	Saying yes or no to physical touch. You get to decide what happens to your body. You can change your mind at any time.
Respect	Two stylized human heads in profile facing each other. Above the left head is a speech bubble containing two hands shaking. Above the right head is a speech bubble containing two hands shaking with a green checkmark.	Asking if a person is OK with a kind of touch. Listening to and accepting what they say.
Comfortable	A stylized human head in profile. Above it is a thought bubble containing a green shield with a white checkmark.	Feeling safe and OK with something.
Boundary	Two stylized human figures standing side-by-side. A vertical dashed line is drawn between them. Above the figure on the left is a speech bubble containing a heart with a question mark.	The line between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. When a person's behavior does not match the relationship, that person has crossed a boundary.



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Word	Picture	Definition
Learned Compliance	 An icon of a human head profile. A speech bubble with a green checkmark is positioned above the mouth. A thought bubble with a red 'X' is positioned above the forehead.	When a person is taught to say yes. They are taught not to be difficult. Over time, they may start saying yes to things they don't really want to do.

Symbols used/adapted from: arasaac.org and www.sclera.be



Trauma-Informed Approach

Many people with IDD are sexual assault survivors. Some people don't want others to know. Some do. Some don't realize they are survivors until they start talking about it. Some survivors are triggered when they talk about sexuality and sexual assault. They relive their trauma. This can be very painful. It can happen unexpectedly.

Talking honestly about sexuality and sexual assault is important. It's also important to keep everyone safe and supported. Use these guidelines when you talk about sexuality and sexual assault.

Plan Ahead

- Read these guidelines. Share them with people who will join the discussion.
- Have a safe space ready. That could be a Zoom breakout room. It could be a room or outside space where you are talking. Let people know where it is. Tell them they can use it whenever they need to. They do not need to ask for permission.

Watch for Triggers

- Watch faces and bodies. You might see signs of anger, fear, or sadness.
- A person might start fidgeting. They might get up and try to leave. They might rock or hug their arms to themselves.
- Sometimes, you can't tell at all from the outside.

Give Support

- You might see someone struggling. Ask if they need a break.
- Someone might share something personal or upsetting. Use words of comfort and support:



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“I believe you.”

“You are brave to share this.”

“It is not your fault.”

“I care about you.”

“I’m sorry this happened to you.”

“I am here to help.”

Follow Up

- Check in after the discussion. Check in more than once.
- Share good resources like:
 - National Sexual Assault Hotline:
800.656.HOPE (4673)
[RAINN Online Hotline-English](https://hotline.rainn.org) (https://hotline.rainn.org)
[RAINN Online Hotline-Spanish](https://hotline.rainn.org/es) (https://hotline.rainn.org/es)
 - Your local rape crisis center. [Find a list at RAINN](https://centers.rainn.org) (https://centers.rainn.org).
 - Some self-care activities. [Find some at RAINN](https://rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma) (https://rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma)



Pacing

There are three modules in the Consent Toolkit. We recommend exploring these resources in three 30-minute sessions.

Session 1: Getting and Giving Consent

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Role-Play, 20 min.

Session 2: Consent Confusion

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Role-Play, 20 min.

Session 3: Consent with Caregivers

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Discussion Guide, 20 min.



What Is Consent?

Preview

Consent means being in charge of what happens with your body. It includes sexual and romantic touch. But it is also important with friends, family members, and others. The more power people have over their own bodies, the safer and healthier they will be.

Getting and giving consent helps people know what to expect in a relationship. They learn and respect each other's boundaries. They are comfortable with each other. This helps them avoid misunderstandings. It prevents emotional and physical harm.

Learning and practicing consent is important. It keeps people safe and healthy. It should include:

- Consenting to physical touch with friends and family. This might include saying no to a hug or asking for a high-five instead.
- Consenting to romantic touch. This can include consenting to hand-holding, kissing, or sexual touch.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Getting and Giving Consent](https://youtu.be/kiUTyM014fw?si=l8_HPKH--_0A9oit) on YouTube. (https://youtu.be/kiUTyM014fw?si=l8_HPKH--_0A9oit)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Role-Play

Work through the role-plays.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the situations and questions.
- If you are working in a group:
 - Read the role-play aloud if helpful.
 - Do the role-play several times with different volunteers.
 - Then discuss the questions.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
- Walk away or leave the group.
- Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.

Role-Play 1: Non-Romantic Consent

Coach: We won the game! I'm so excited! Can I give you a big hug?

Player: I'm happy we won too. But I don't really want a hug.

Coach: That's okay. How about a high-five instead?

Player: Yes, I like high-fives.

Coach: *(Gives a high-five.)* That was awesome!

Player: Thanks for understanding. I like that you asked first.

Coach: No problem. I want you to feel comfortable.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you like to celebrate when something exciting happens?



- Does everyone like to celebrate in the same way?
- Has anyone asked you for a hug or touch when you didn't want it? How did you handle it?
- Have you ever given a hug or touched someone without asking? What happened?
- What if the coach hugged the player without asking first? How might the player have felt?
- Why is it important to ask for consent before touching someone?
- Were both people respectful in how they talked to each other? Why is that important?

Role-Play 2: Romantic Consent

Person 1: Thanks for a nice evening. I had fun!

Date: I really like you. Can I kiss you?

Person 1: You can kiss me on the cheek, but not on the mouth.

Date: Thank you for telling me. I'll kiss your cheek.

Person 1: I'm okay with that.

Date: How was that?

Person 1: That was good. I feel comfortable.

Date: I'm glad. I want to respect your boundaries.



Discussion Questions:

- Has anyone ever asked to kiss or touch you in a way you didn't want? How did you feel and what did you say?
- How did the date show respect when asking for consent before the kiss?
- What would have happened if the date didn't ask for consent first? How might Person 1 have felt?
- How do you think Person 1 felt after they were listened to and respected?
- Why is it okay to say no to something, even if you like the person?
- How can you tell if someone is respecting your boundaries, like in this role-play?



Consent Confusion

Preview

In the last session, we explored common situations where consent is important. But it is not always so black and white. People may be OK with a certain touch from one friend or family member, but not another. The touches people are OK with can change with how they are feeling. People's relationships also change. Consent must be able to change as well.

In this session, we will explore more confusing examples of consent. We will talk about how everyone has a right to control their own body. This includes changing or taking back consent when we want to. We do not have to give a reason for changing or taking back consent. It is our right to do so.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Why Consent Is Important](https://youtu.be/V5vu0Oq9Nsl?si=wB_65JXdwOXfK0rs) on YouTube.
(https://youtu.be/V5vu0Oq9Nsl?si=wB_65JXdwOXfK0rs)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Role-Play

Work through the role-plays.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the situations and questions.
- If you are working in a group:
 - Read the role-play aloud if helpful.
 - Do the role-play several times with different volunteers.
 - Then discuss the questions.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
- Walk away or leave the group.
- Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.

Role-Play 1: Refusing a Hug at a Party

Person 1 is at a holiday party with family. They are feeling overwhelmed with the noise and stress. Their Aunt goes in for a hug. Person 1 puts their hand up to stop her.

Person 1: Hold on—I don't want a hug right now.

Aunt: But we always hug. Is something wrong?

Person 1: I'm feeling a little overwhelmed today.

Aunt: But I'm your Aunt! You should hug me!

Person 1: I know you're disappointed, but I said no.

Aunt: OK, I understand. Would you like to sit and talk instead?



Person 1: That sounds good. Thanks for understanding.

Aunt: It's OK. I just want you to feel safe and calm.

Discussion Questions:

- Imagine Person 1's Aunt would not take no for an answer. What words could Person 1 use to show they will not give a hug? What actions could they take?
- Why did Person 1 not want to hug, even though they have hugged before?
- What other ways could the Aunt show they care?
- Have you ever felt too stressed or tired to be social? How did you handle it?
- Why must you respect a person's choice to say no, even if they've said yes before?
- How does asking for and respecting changes in consent help people feel safe?

Role-Play 2: Taking Back Consent at the End of a Date

Two people are at the end of their second date. They both consented to kiss on their first date. The date goes in for a kiss, but Person 1 stops them.

Person 1: Stop. I don't want to kiss tonight.

Date: But we kissed last week. I should be able to kiss you again tonight.

Person 1: I know we kissed last week. And I was OK with it then. But I'm not tonight.

Date: But everything was going so well. Why not?



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Person 1: I don't have to give a reason. I just don't want to.

Date: Okay, I get it. I'm disappointed. But I respect your decision.

Person 1: Thanks for understanding.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever had someone change consent on you? How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever not wanted a hug, kiss or other touch, but didn't say so? What stopped you from saying no?
- Why is it important to respect a person's choices, even if you don't understand them?
- What are some safe, healthy ways to handle frustration when someone tells you, no?
- Was it OK for Person 1 to say no without explaining why? Why is that their right?
- How does respecting someone's choices help build trust and safety with them?



Consent with Caregivers

Preview

In the last sessions, we talked about giving and changing consent. In this session, we will discuss how this works with caregivers. People with IDD sometimes need help with personal care. This often involves touching the person's body. But all people have the right to say no if they don't feel comfortable with someone touching them.

Learned compliance makes consent even more challenging. People with IDD are taught to say yes. They are taught not to be difficult. People with IDD should practice saying no when something doesn't feel right. Caregivers should ask for consent before they begin a task. They should listen to and respect the answer. They should check back during the task. A person has the right to change their mind, even if they said yes before.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Feeling Unsafe without Consent](https://youtu.be/k7qp-BSAiSY?si=Bdm9Xl-4tTgxGC1E) on YouTube. (https://youtu.be/k7qp-BSAiSY?si=Bdm9Xl-4tTgxGC1E)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Discussion Guide

Work through the discussion questions.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the questions.
- If you are working in a group, discuss them with your peers or the self-advocates you are working with.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
- Walk away or leave the group.
- Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.

1. Why should caregivers ask for consent before helping with personal care?

- How would you feel if someone didn't ask before helping you with something personal, like bathing?
- How can a caregiver ask for consent in a respectful way?
- How can you say no to a caregiver in a respectful way, if you don't feel comfortable?

2. Why is it okay to change your mind about consent, even if you said yes before?

- Have you ever agreed to something and changed your mind later? How did it work out?
- Why is it important for others to listen when you change your mind?

3. What is learned compliance? How can it make it harder to say no?

- Have you ever said yes to something because you thought you couldn't say no?



- Why do you think some people with IDD feel they can't say no to their caregivers?
 - How can caregivers watch for learned compliance? What should they do if they think a person is uncomfortable but is saying yes anyway?
4. How can caregivers ask for consent from the people they work with?
- What should a caregiver do if you say no to something they want to help you with?
 - Why is it important for caregivers to ask for consent every time they help, not just once?
 - What if a person has a bad day and needs space from others?
5. How can we be better allies to people with IDD in giving and taking back consent?
- What can you do if you see someone being pressured to say yes when they don't want to?
 - How can we help people with IDD feel confident saying no when they feel uncomfortable?
 - How does supporting them to say no when they are uncomfortable help them stay safe?



For More Information

Visit [Seen and Heard: IDD Community](https://www.youtube.com/@SeenHeardIDD)

(<https://www.youtube.com/@SeenHeardIDD>) on YouTube. You will find more videos about this topic. You will find videos about related topics.

Credit

This toolkit was developed by [Strategic Education Solutions](https://www.strategiceducationsolutions.com) (<https://www.strategiceducationsolutions.com>) in partnership with [UMass Chan Medical School](https://www.umassmed.edu) (<https://www.umassmed.edu>).

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