

PROMOTING HEALTHY SEXUALITY

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With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health.

www.familyvoices.org and www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org.

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Promoting Healthy Sexuality: 1, 2, 3

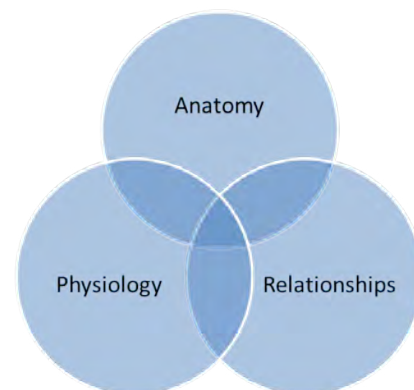
Promoting healthy sexuality consists of teaching children three kinds of information:

- **Anatomy:** This is the “what” of sexuality: What body parts do we all share, and what parts are different for males and females?
- **Physiology:** This is the “how” of sexuality: How do the body parts work?
- **Relationships:** This is the “why”: Why does it matter?

Just as learning about math starts early in life, learning about sexuality works best when it starts early in life as well. Math lessons start with counting and simple math and progress to more complex ideas as the child grows. Sexuality starts with simple lessons, such as teaching a very young child the proper names for body parts. Physiology lessons get more complex as a child's ability to understand them grows. Give simple answers to simple questions and more complex answers to more complex questions later on.

Relationships

Relationship lessons are the “value-added” lessons of sexuality. They begin very early as babies learn they are loved and can love back. They learn the value of touch as a loving gesture from the start. Gentle touch creates a sense of calming and compassion, which can develop into different types of intimacy in some



of relationships. As children grow, they understand different kinds of relationships between people, and they learn that some relationships are healthier than others. This is where your values and beliefs are important as you teach your family about relationships. Your value-added lessons might include the following:

- Some body parts are private and not for public viewing. [anatomy]
- Some body functions are private and should be only be shared with others in specific ways or times. [physiology]
- Feelings between two people grow over time, and there are appropriate ways to express those feelings. [relationships]

Resources: Talking to your Children about Sexuality

- www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org/pdf/FV%20BF%20HealthySexualDev-%20Theme%202011.pdf
- www.mayoclinic.com/health/sex-education/CC00076
- www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/Pages/Talking-to-Your-Child-About-Sex.aspx