



# The Ecosystem of Sexuality and Social Services

Training Material Property of:  
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Among Friends, LLC

# Your Trainer: Shanya Luther, M. Div

## [Link to Shanya's training bio](#)

- Accessibility - Self Description
- **Social-Sexual Ecologist** with more than 20 years of experience
- I incorporate **other critical fields of study** including: attachment theory, trauma informed care, social-emotional learning, neurobiology, intersectionality



This Training is presented by



[www.among-friends.org](http://www.among-friends.org)

Among Friends' area of expertise is helping parents and professionals support someone's basic human needs and rights related to healthy relationships and healthy sexual development.

# Agency's Programs and Services

## Social-Sexual Training and Resources

Training Topics for parents and a variety of different professionals

Sexual Self-Determination Certification Train-the-trainer program

Marketplace Low-cost tools and resources

Consultation & Advocacy Assisting someone and/or their support team

## Social-Sexual Behavior Services

Behavior Services Developing person-centered behavior plans

# Important Things To Remember

- To prevent abuse and exploitation it's essential to promote healthy options; for example: **to prevent intimate partner violence and sexual abuse, we must promote healthy relationships and healthy sexuality**
- When someone has complex needs, the people working for them need to help them build the life and relationships ***they want for themselves.***
- Social services are responsible\* for **supporting self-determination and maximum independence**, which necessitates education and skill building related to sexuality and relationships!
- **People have a right to take risks in their life**... we simply need to help them make well-informed choices.
- **People have legal rights to explore and express their sexuality.**

We cannot respond in a way that prevents/impeodes their sexuality



# Training Goals

- Understand the ecosystem of sexuality and social services
- Examine how common responses often lead to rights violations and an increase in dangerous behaviors
- Identify available tools to develop rights-based responses
- Recognize the necessity for working together across disciplines for safer outcomes

## Our Related Training Topics:

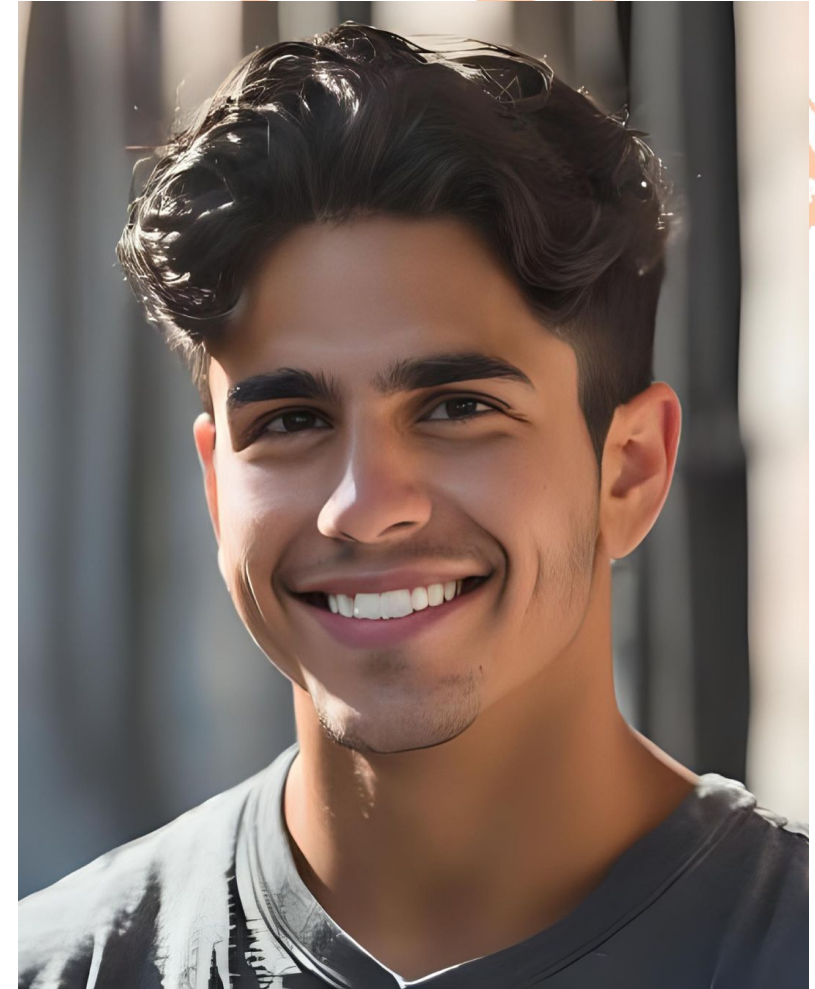
1. Sexual Health Advocacy
2. Sexual Health Rights are Basic Human Rights
3. The Intersection of Sexual Development & the Need for Direct Care



# One Person's Story

Neil, 22 yrs – 25 yrs

- Stalking Behaviors (illegal)
- Masturbation Concerns (situationally inappropriate)
- Porn at Work (risky)
- Bar & Lap Incident (socially problematic)
- Stranger Overnight (unsafe)
- Strip Clubs (unhealthy)



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**Success  
Story!**





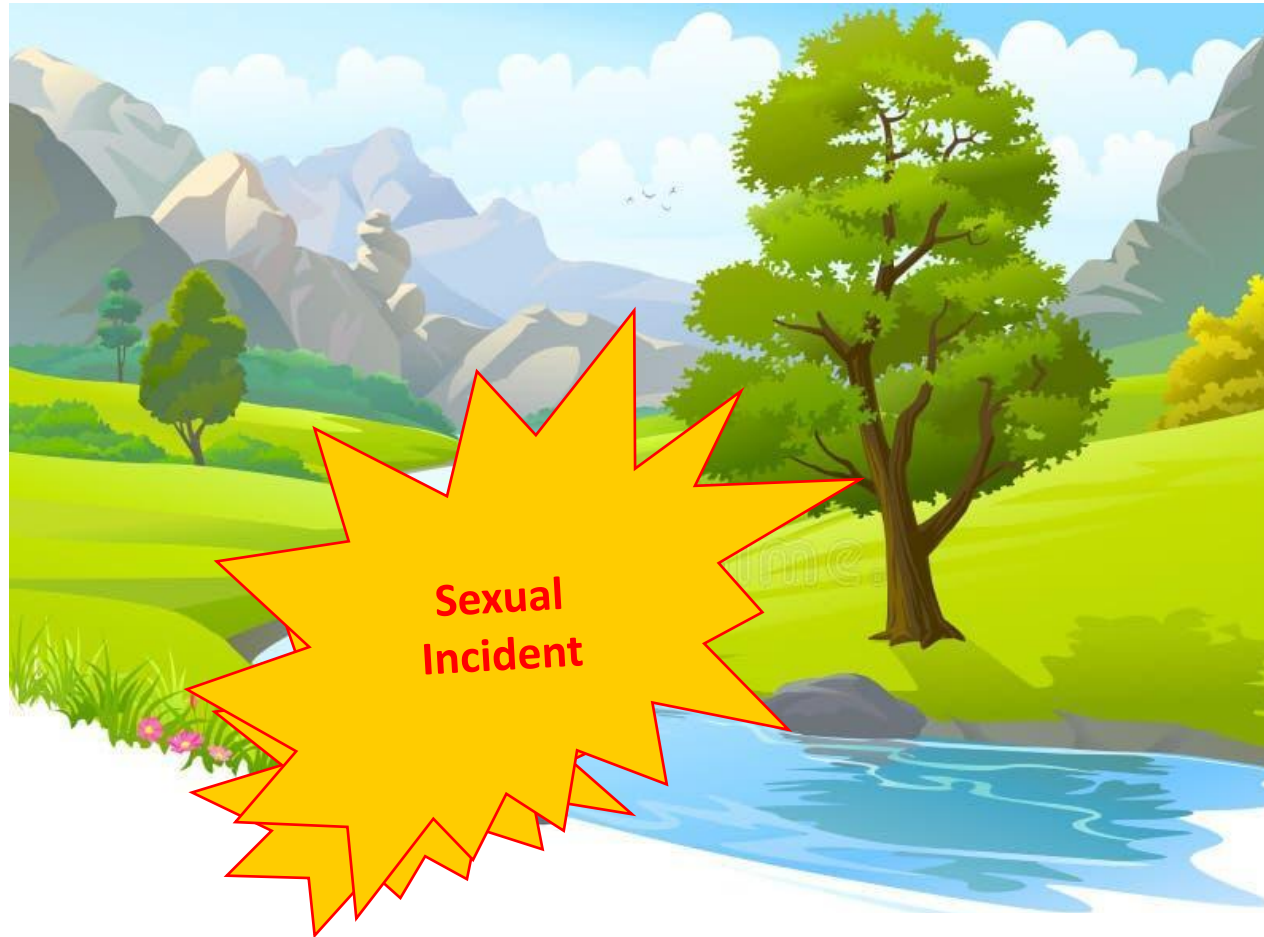
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# **An Overview of the Ecosystem**

# The River Analogy

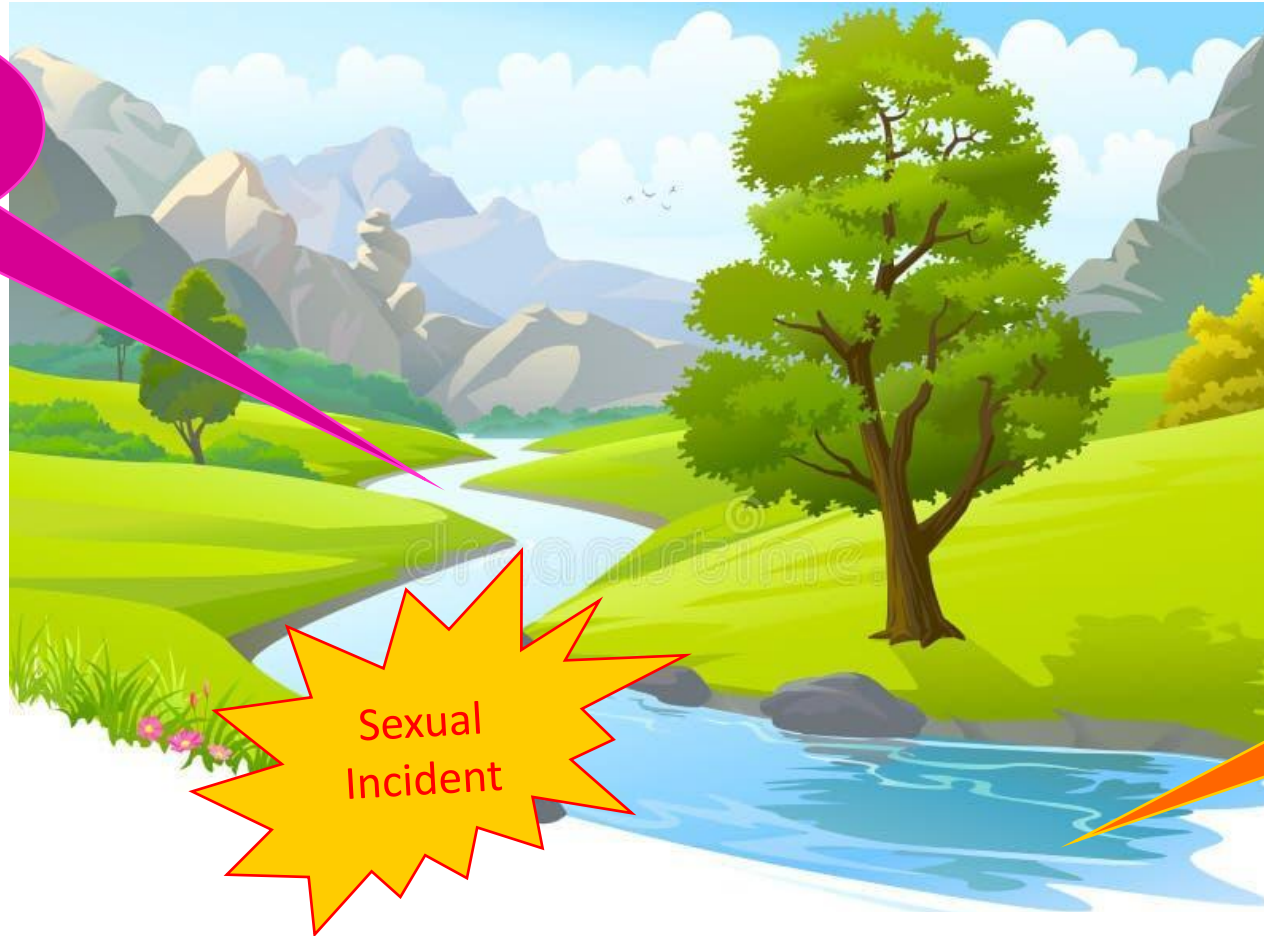


# In Our Work, The “Crisis”= Sexual Incident



# The Ecosystem of Sexual Incidents

Upstream  
Factors

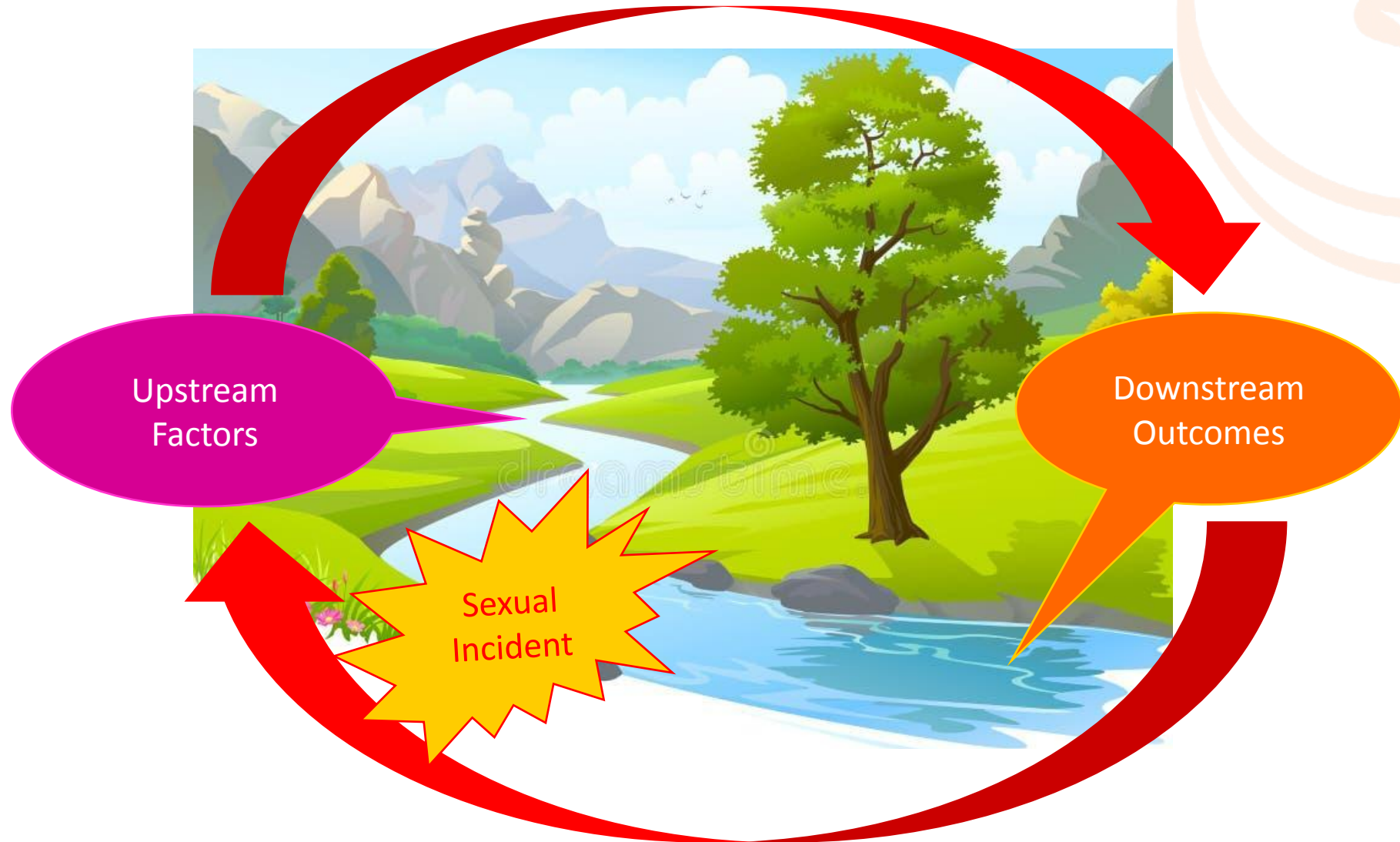


Sexual  
Incident

Downstream  
Outcomes



# We Have Reinforcing Feedback Loop







# A Closer Look at the Relationship Between Up & Downstream

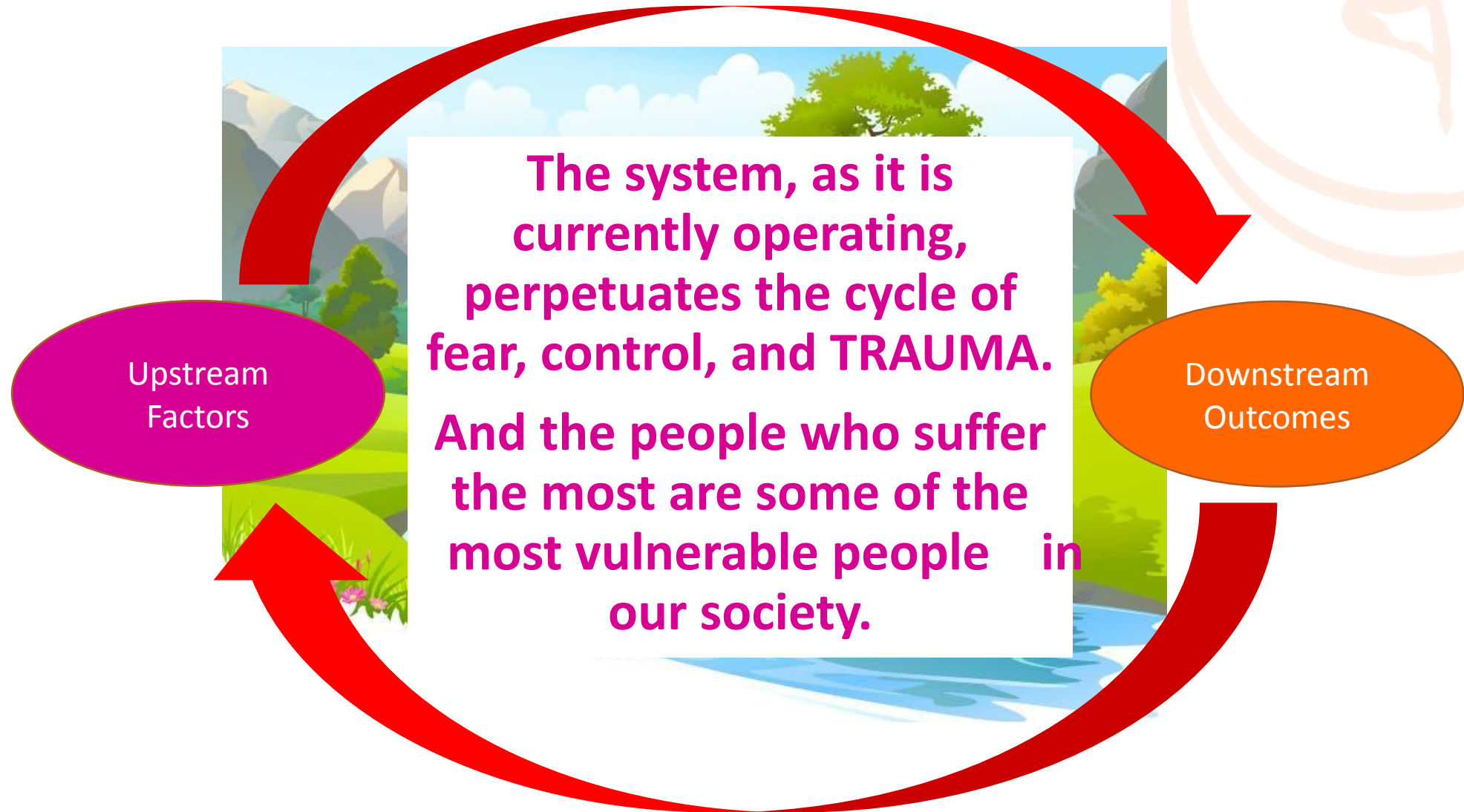
# Examples of Upstream Factors



# Examples of Downstream Outcomes



# The System is Self-Perpetuating



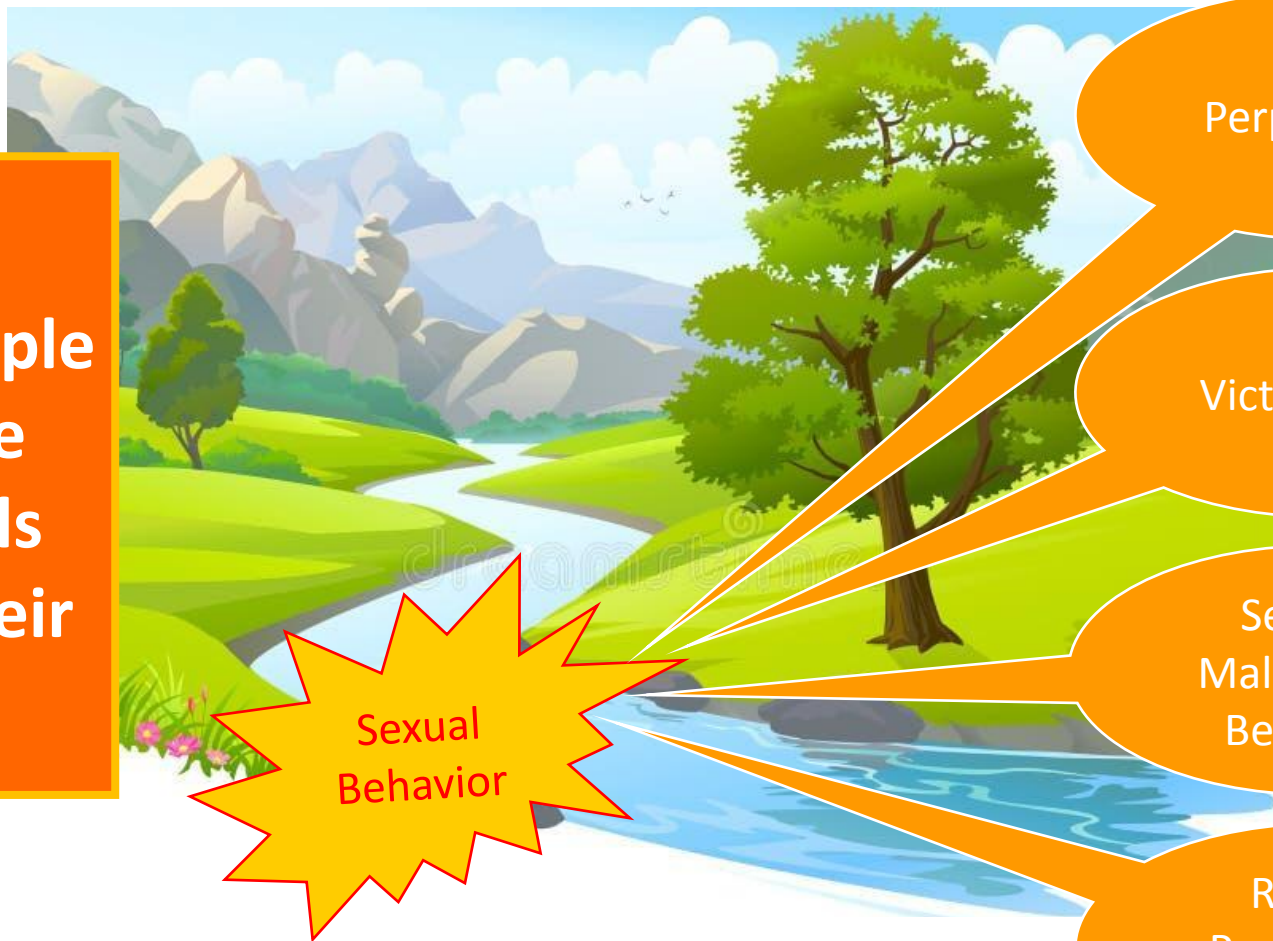
# Understanding the Four Primary Outcomes of a Sexual Incident for Vulnerable People





# What Are Most Sexual Behaviors Labeled?

And what happens to people who get these behavior labels written into their records?



Sexual  
Behavior

Perpetration

Victimization

Sexually  
Maladaptive  
Behaviors

Risky or  
Problematic  
Sexual Behavior

# Reactive Responses Cause More Danger

Which are completely unsafe

**Power  
Struggles,  
Emotional  
Dysregulation,  
Survival  
Responses,  
Maladaptive  
Behaviors**

**Sexual  
Behavior**

Restrictions

To keep people safe

Controlling  
Responses

To keep people safe

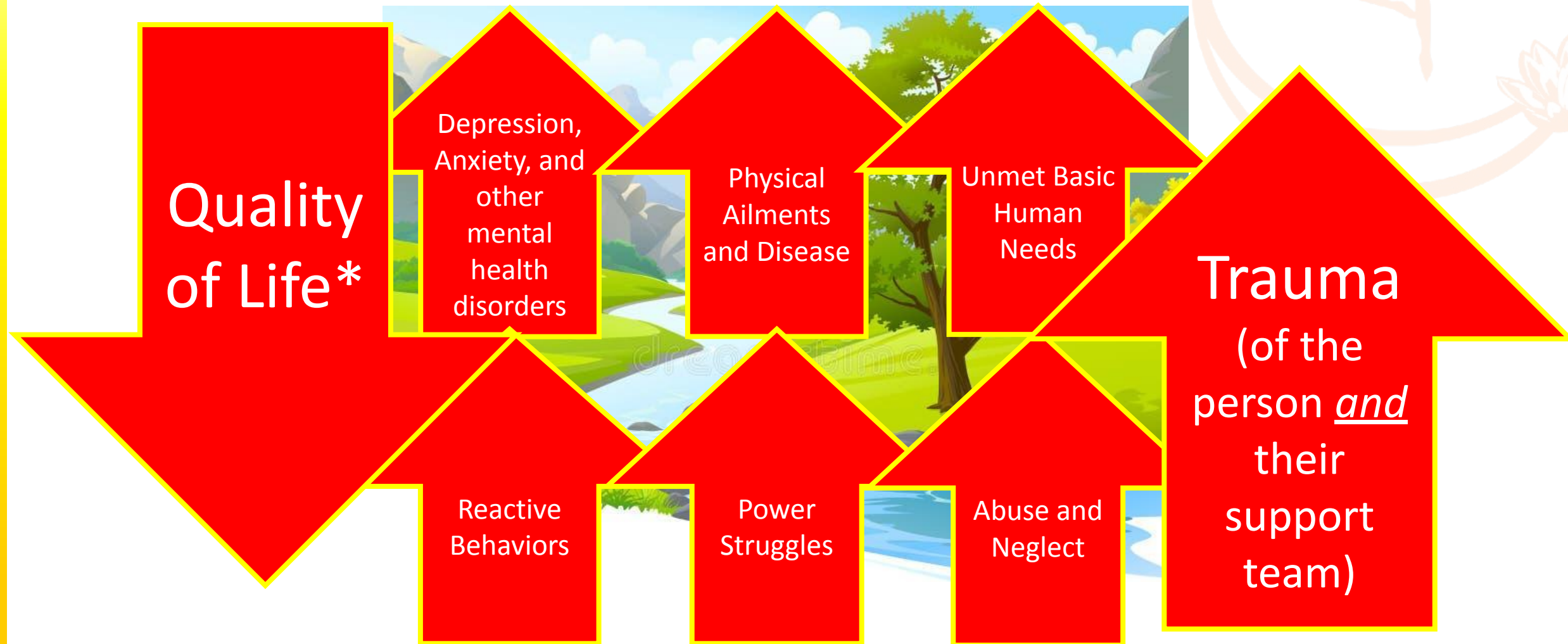
Excessive  
Supervision

To keep people safe

Rights  
Violations

To keep people safe

# The Entire Ecosystem Becomes Toxic



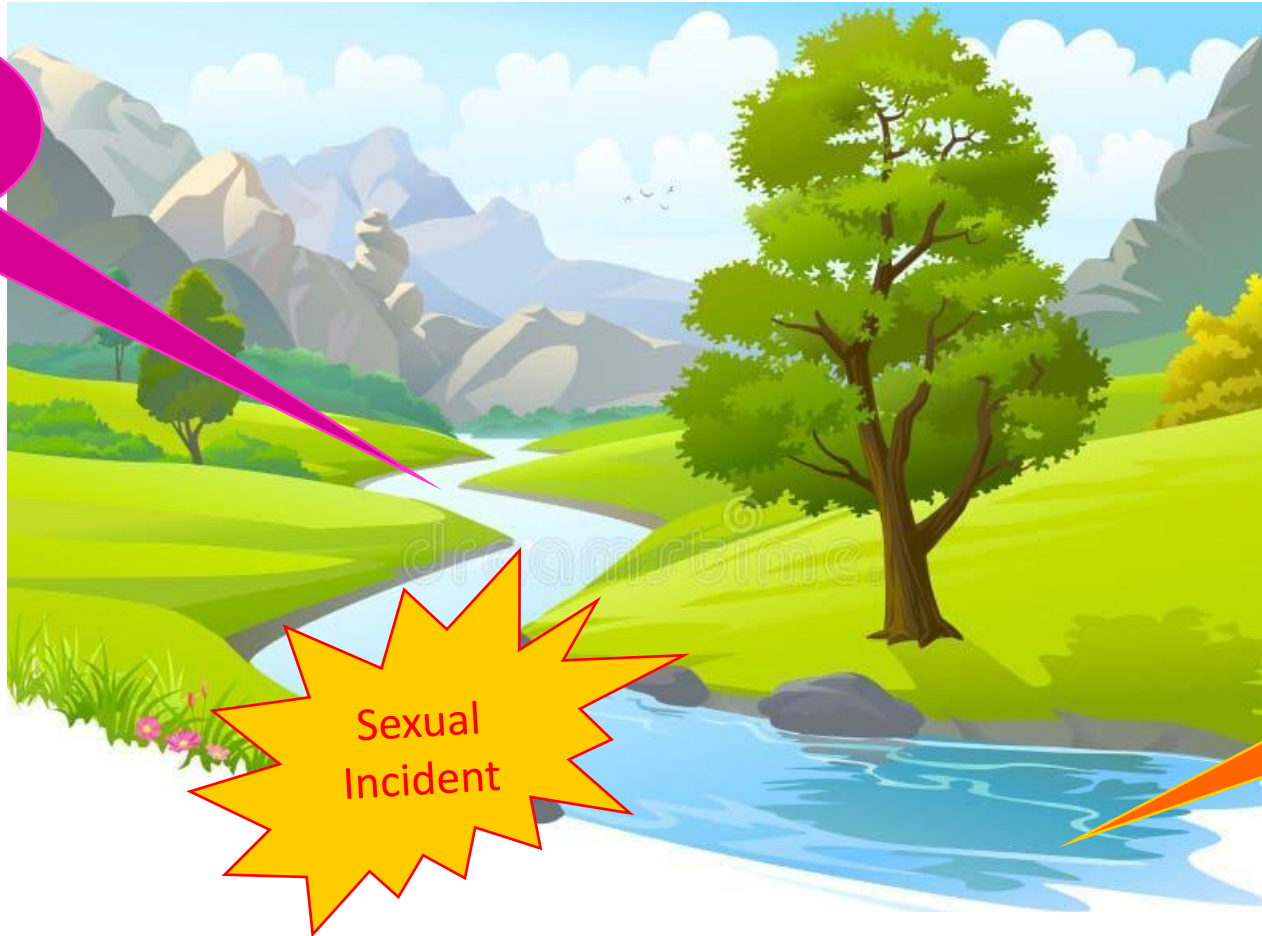
# Far Reaching Implications





# All of Us Have To Help Break the Cycle

Upstream



Sexual  
Incident

Downstream



# How Do We Change the Ecosystem?



- **Raise Awareness!** End the infantilization of people with disabilities and disorders and eliminate the stigma of sexuality and disabilities.
- **Normalize!** Expect people of all backgrounds and life experiences to be sexual and to want relationships!!!
- **Participate!** Recognize we all play a role in healthy sexual development!
- **Pay Attention!** Understand a person's emerging sexual drive and be proactive!
- **Become sex-positive!** Raise awareness of healthy sexual development; address sexuality at all levels of care and in all settings.
- **Ask Questions and Identify Goals!** Find out what people want as they age regarding relationships and sexuality and help them achieve it!!!
- **Create Plans!** Outline a positive path toward supporting sexual health and activities

# How Do We Change the Ecosystem?



- **Be Strengths-Based!** Focus on Pro-Active, Preventative, Positive, and Person-Centered supports related to sexuality and relationships.
- **Build Capacity!** Train parents and professionals who support vulnerable people.
- **Allocate Funding!** Focus money on prevention work.
- **Build Structural Partnerships** across disciplines with both accountability AND collaboration, including:
  - Abuse Investigators, Law enforcement, Judicial Systems
  - Medical, Mental, and Behavioral Health
  - Policy Makers, Case Management Entities, Provider Organizations
  - Foster Care Providers, Direct Care Professionals, Parents, etc.

# Tools to Develop Rights-Based Responses



- Advocate for **Sexual Self-Determination**
- Promote **Dignity of Risk**
- Engage in **Supported Decision-Making**
- Emphasize **Social-Sexual Education and Skill Building**
- Identify **Trusted Advocates**
- Prioritize **Proactive Approaches** vs. Reactive Responses
- Develop **Positive and Person-Centered Supports**
- Offer **Choices and Alternative Behaviors**
- Protect **Legal Rights**
- Utilize **Trauma-Informed Care**
- Request **Social-Sexual Assessments**

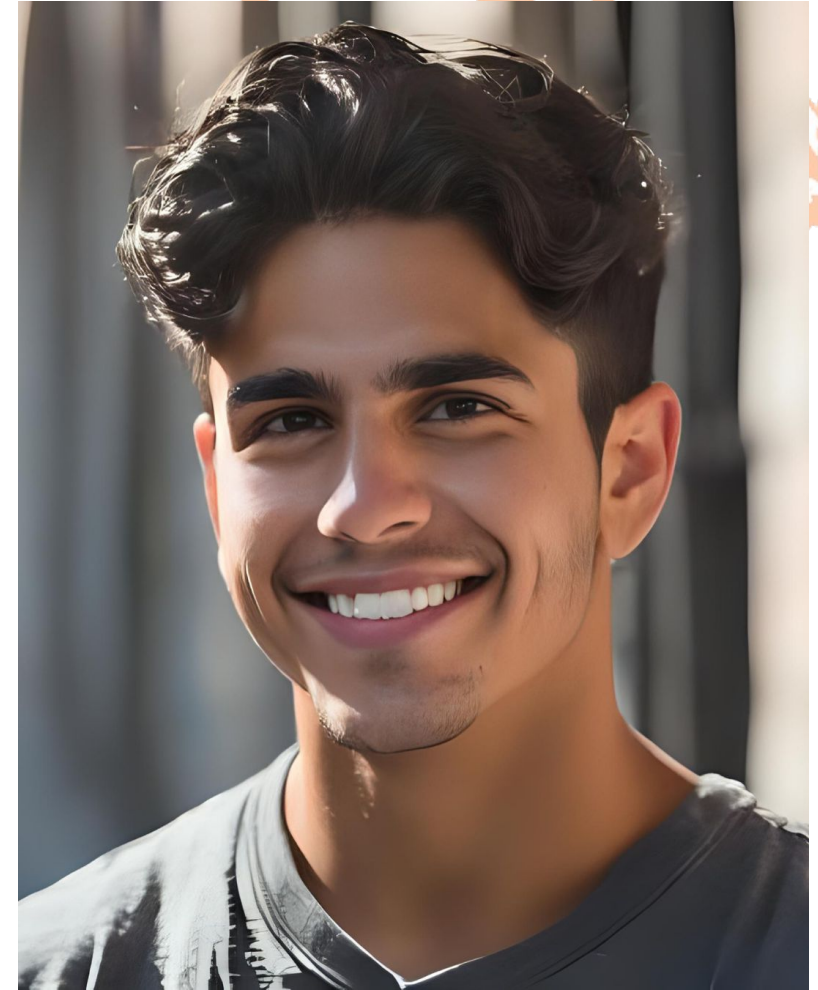
# A Healthier Social-Sexual Ecosystem



# Back To One Person's Story

## Remember Neil?

- After receiving education about sexuality, safer sex practices, and some of the possible outcomes from engaging in intercourse...





# Resources

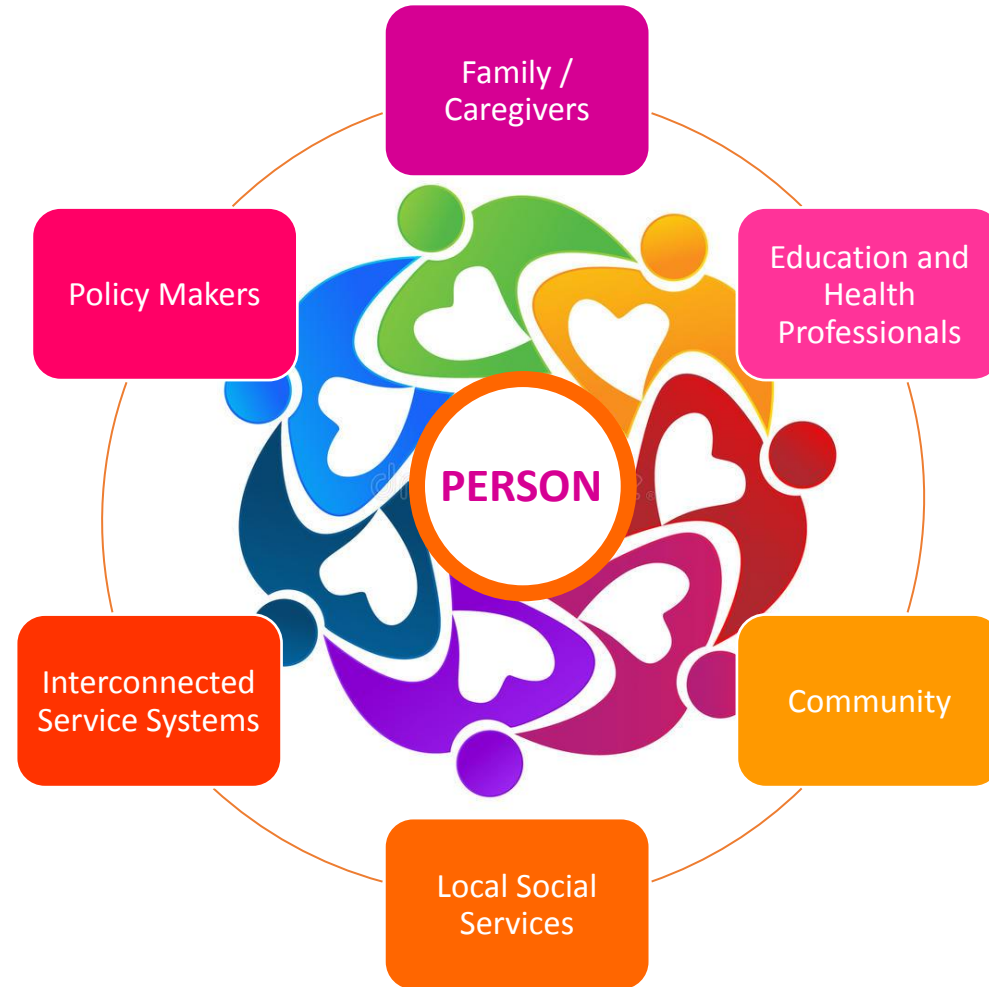
- You can utilize our [ever-growing list of resources](#). And you can submit resources for it, too!
- You can use the OHSU UCEDD [Resource Hub](#).
- Here is a **list of a few resources** specific to this topic.



An abstract graphic featuring a large orange parallelogram in the center. Overlaid on this is a large pink circle containing the word "Closing" in white. Surrounding the central shapes are several smaller circles in orange, pink, and yellow, some with thin outlines. A faint, stylized lotus flower is visible on the right side. The background is white, and there is a yellow vertical bar on the far left.

# Closing

# A Village Approach to Healthy Sexuality



# Call To Action

Please take this information **and do more with it!**

- Discuss it with your co-workers, your family, and your friends.
- Advocate for peoples' needs around sexuality and relationships!
- Familiarize yourself with key issues related to sexuality, gender, relationships, legal rights, and trauma in your field.
- Ask for more training for your organization!
- Talk about how to change policies and procedures at your work to support sexual self-determination of people you serve.
- Commit to supporting healthy sexuality and working together with your community partners!



# Contact Information



## *Social-Sexual Training and Resources*

Certification Program [certification@among-friends.org](mailto:certification@among-friends.org)

Marketplace [marketplace@among-friends.org](mailto:marketplace@among-friends.org)

Trainings [trainings@among-friends.org](mailto:trainings@among-friends.org)

## *Social-Sexual Behavior Services*

Oregon Behavior Services [positivesupports.or@among-friends.org](mailto:positivesupports.or@among-friends.org)

Washington Positive Supports [positivesupports.wa@among-friends.org](mailto:positivesupports.wa@among-friends.org)



# Training Evaluations and Q&A

We Value Your Feedback!!!

Please complete an evaluation to help us continue to improve our trainings.

**Among Friends Training Evaluation**

And ***Thank You*** for making healthy relationships and healthy sexuality a priority!

