



# Introductory Training Session on **Supports for Disability and Sexuality**

Training Material Property of:  
Shanya Luther, M.Div  
Among Friends, LLC

**Hosted By**



**This Introductory Training Will Cover:**

- An overview of our agency programs and services
- Why it is critical to provide social-sexual services
- What these services look like in real life

# Our Agency's Specialty

Our area of expertise is helping parents and professionals support someone's basic human needs and rights related to:

- **BODIES** - body parts, bodily functions, body image
- **GENDER** - exploring gender identity / expression, transitioning
- **SEXUALITY** - orientation, activities, risky behaviors
- **RELATIONSHIPS** - friendship, dating, partnership, breaking up
- **COMMUNICATION** - boundaries and consent
- **RIGHTS** - self determination and supported decision-making
- **AND Other Related Topics** - online connections and sexual expression, safety and legalities, ...and much, much, more!!!



# Our Agency's Priorities

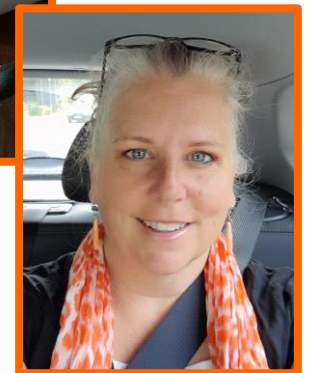
We aim to help people keep their behaviors **SAFE, HEALTHY, LEGAL, and "SITUATIONALLY APPROPRIATE"** so that they are able to maintain their services, housing, access to school, job, etc.

We also emphasize:

- ~ Supporting the **whole person** and their **full human experience**
- ~ **Promoting alternative behaviors** that are safe, healthy and legal
- ~ Helping people meet their **basic human needs**
- ~ Protecting their **legal rights**
- ~ Improving their **quality of life** and **increasing their independence**

# Introduction: Shanya Luther, M. Div

- Accessibility - Self Description
- **Social-Sexual Ecologist** with more than 20 years of experience writing, speaking, and presenting about healthy relationships and healthy sexual development.
- I incorporate **other critical fields of study** into my work, including trauma informed care, neurobiology, attachment theory, social-emotional learning, and intersectionality.



# Our Agency's Programs and Services



## Social-Sexual TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Training Critical topics for parents and 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 support plans

# Training and Resources Program Staff



**Shanya Luther, M.Div**

**Founder and Co- Director / Social-Sexual Ecologist**

**[shanya@among-friends.org](mailto:shanya@among-friends.org)**

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



**Mel Moseley, MA**

**Certification Program Manager**

**[mel@among-friends.org](mailto:mel@among-friends.org)**

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

# Behavior Services Program Staff



**Cara Wiggins**

**Co- Director & Behavior Services Program Director**

**[cara@among-friends.org](mailto:cara@among-friends.org)**

**[positivesupports@among-friends.org](mailto:positivesupports@among-friends.org)**

**Meet the rest of our Behavior Services Team!**





# Our Community Partners

We have collaborated and contracted with a variety of organizations, including:

- **Foster Care Providers** and Direct Support Agencies/Organizations
  - **School Districts** and Transition Programs
  - **Medical and Mental Health Providers** and Related Professionals
  - **Abuse Investigators**, Child Welfare and CASA Advocates
  - **Juvenile Justice**, Defense Lawyers, Parole Officers, and Judges
  - **State Ombudsman** and State Disability Services Departments
- ...and **many** more!

# Why Are Social-Sexual Services Critical?



- Sexuality is a **birth-to-death experience** - regardless of someone's sexual activities or experiences
- Sexual exploration and play are a **natural part of a person's development** – starting in childhood
- **Puberty** is going to change a person's body, hormones, and sexual drive; and some people with developmental disabilities experience puberty even younger than the average population
- People with cognitive and social challenges who do not receive education and skill-building make serious mistakes that can have **catastrophic consequences**.

# When We Fail At Supporting Relationships and Healthy Sexual Development



# What Do Social-Sexual Services Look Like?



People are often question what social-sexual services are and are nervous about how they work. That is completely understandable given the historically taboo and uncomfortable nature of these topics.

The reality is that there is a huge range of methods for how these services can be provided and strategies for building supports. It is essential, however, for social-sexual services to be: **Positive, Proactive, Preventative,** and **Person-Centered.**

We'll review some of the methods our agency uses, and then we'll give you some specific examples of types of supports.

# Empowerment

Our Trainings empower parents and professionals to address relationships and sexual development and help people keep their behaviors **safe, healthy, legal** and **situationally appropriate**.

We have a variety of topics designed for: Direct Care / Support, Other Specialized Professions (such as behavior, employment, medical and mental health), and Policy and Social Change.

**We have over 25 topics**, such as: Puberty vs. Adolescence, Teaching Consent & Boundaries, Decoding Sexual Behaviors, Workplace Relationships, The Ecosystem of Sexuality & Social Services

# Building Capacity

Our Sexual Self-Determination Certification Program builds the capacity of parents and professionals to provide **rights based, medically accurate,** and **trauma informed** support *and* advocacy on matters related to healthy relationships, sexual health and development, and challenging sexual behaviors for vulnerable people.

Participants gain knowledge, skills, tools, and resources to increase their confidence and competence. They can take 1, 2, or all 3 tiers depending on their interests and needs.

Tier 3 is a train-the-trainer program, and graduates will become certified instructors on the SHARE (Sexual Health And Relationships Education) curriculum.

# Providing Tools

Our Marketplace is designed to build tools and resources for individuals, their families, and their support teams to help **educate**, **build skills**, and **address sensitive topics**.

The tools are designed to be interactive and engaging. They include worksheets, games, activities, and handouts!

Some examples of our tools are: Assessment Tools, Social-Sexual Card Decks, a Guide to the Crisis Cycle, and a Professional Nurturing Touch Menu

# Offering Guidance

Our Consultation and Advocacy Services offer vulnerable people and their support teams help when and how they need it. Both services are hourly, and contracts are set up in advance to ensure we prioritize what you want to work on most.

**Consultation** can include tools, education, ideas, resources, and strategies regarding social-sexual concerns, behaviors, or goals.

**Advocacy** can include support, guidance, and professional advice when someone is being discriminated against, or has been accused of sexually inappropriate or criminal sexual behaviors.



# Normalizing Sexuality and Disabilities



# Designing Innovative Solutions

Here are some specific examples of strategies we've used to support some of our clients:

- Period panties
- Differing religious / cultural values from parent to child
- Viewing child pornography
- Conflict over adult child's desire for relationship
- Wanting to have a baby
- Needing safer sex education



# Learn More!

- Find out more about us on our new website: [among-friends.org](https://among-friends.org) and add your name and email to our [contact list](#) to SCORE! our monthly newsletter with behavior tips and resources.
- Explore our [2025 Training Menu](#) with more than 25 different topics. We'd love to train your staff in 2024!
- We're building a network of subject specialists and trainers! Learn all about our [Sexual Self-Determination Certification Program](#) and save your seat in the next [Tier 1: FOUNDATIONS!](#)
- Discover and share our [Marketplace of tools and resources](#) related to sexuality and relationships.

# 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*

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