

Training Guide

SED VERSION



Friendships & Dating Program



UAA Center for
Human Development
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE



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Section 1 Introduction

Adolescence is a time when social relationships and interactions outside of the family unit become increasingly important (Blakemore & Burnett, 2009). A major goal during the adolescent stage of life is the development of a social identity, which supports the adolescent through the transition to adulthood (Blakemore & Burnett, 2009). A lack of strong social relationships can be a predictor of lessened general welfare in later adulthood (Morris & Steinberg, 2001).

Individuals with SED are identified as youth under 18 years old having both psychosocial impairment and clinically significant emotional and behavioral complications (Helflinger & Pinkard, 2006). Adolescents who develop SED conditions commonly come from backgrounds of trauma and neglect, which often lead to difficulty in functioning in a social environment (Mazza & Overstreet, 2000).

SED conditions can act as a major barrier to forming meaningful interpersonal and romantic relationships for adolescent populations. For example, SED youth have a difficult time with emotional regulation, social stigma, consistent home environments, social connections with peers, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, school environments, romantic relationships, sexual risks, and dating violence (McKenna, Mitra, & Mouradian, 2012; MacMullin, Waccbter, Wekerle, & Weiss, 2011; Dashiff, DiMcco, Myers, & Sheppard, 2009; Hargrave & Knect, 2002; Dineen, Hall, Schlesinger, & Stanton, 2000; Fitzgerald, Kay, & McConaughy, 1998; Bray, Jenson, Kehle, & Musser, 2001; Bryant, Hinkle, Rivard, & Valois, 1997). Teens with SED have a difficult time making and keeping healthy relationships with peers.

Friendship and dating are two acceptable conventions which allow people to learn and experience ways to achieve intimacy. As people's learning opportunities and experiences vary, it is important that youth with SED receive instruction on acceptable ways to foster relationships that may lead to intimacy.

The Friendships & Dating Program (FDP) was developed at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Center for Human Development (CHD) by a team of professionals who work with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Friendships & Dating is a preventative program designed to teach teens and adults, 16 years old and older, with intellectual and related developmental disabilities how to develop and maintain healthy relationships and prevent interpersonal violence. Over the years, several agencies have begun to use FDP with youth with SED and have led to the development of the SED version of the program.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH WITH SED

Research has documented the strong connection between interpersonal relationships and physical and mental health. Meaningful relationships are