

Conference
Preventing sexual abuse of children
Madrid, 10-11 December 2013

Preventing sexual abuse of children with disabilities

**Ms Laia Alamany Ferré, Program on Sexual Abuse and Disabilities,
Vicki Bernadet Foundation (Spain)**

Summary

WE, TOO, HAVE RELATIONSHIPS

At the Vicki Bernadet Foundation, we are committed to awareness-raising and training aimed at persons with disabilities in order to build their capacity to prevent sexual abuse.

In terms of awareness-raising, we run various projects aimed at both children and adults with disabilities, the key project being the performance of the story *The Air Curtains*, which is aimed at boys and girls from the age of 8. The main objectives include: preventing sexual abuse and promoting its detection, providing information about the rights of children and persons with disabilities, learning to express emotions and feelings and learning to say no.

In terms of training, we have the project *We, Too, Have Relationships*, aimed both at young people with disabilities and at their families. Its aims are:

- On the one hand, to provide support to young people with disabilities so that they can have a healthy, consensual sex life and, in developing those abilities, teach them to detect and respond properly to situations of abuse.
- On the other, to help the families of these young people to come to terms with the sexuality of their disabled sons and daughters, by working on the fears and difficulties associated with this subject.

The training consists of 10 one-and-a-half hour sessions for the persons with disabilities and 4 two-hour sessions for their families.

In the groups of persons with disabilities, it is important to have a small number of participants (between 8 and 10) and to apply an appropriate methodology in order to create an area of trust where, through various dynamics, difficulties can be verbalised and solutions sought. The main points we work on are: intimacy, trust, detection of situations of abuse, the proper response to such situations, and sexuality and sexual abuse. Two professionals from the centre where the activity is held participate in this training in order to give continuity to the various situations which may arise. Also present is either a sexologist or a nurse from the relevant care centre. The latter's presence creates a link between the young people with disabilities and the network of existing public services and helps to make the professionals working there more aware of the difficulties and concerns which exist within this group and which are generally

ignored. This has made it possible to detect and respond to a considerable number of cases of ill-treatment of which the centres were unaware.

The training for families provides a forum where topics such as the sexuality of their sons or daughters, the prevention of situations of abuse and the difficulties involved in detecting such situations can be discussed. The key aspects covered by this training include parent-child communication and respect for the disabled person's own wishes.

Useful link:

<http://www.fbernadet.org/>