

# Adolescent Development



## Addressing Sexual Abuse of Youth in Custody

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# Objective

- Understand and identify the components of adolescent development.



# Types of Adolescent Development

- Cognitive Development
- Behavioral Development
- Emotional Development and Romantic Attachments
- Sexual Development



# Cognitive Development

- Toddlers – Preschool
  - Learn language
  - Recognize objects
  
- Age 6-12 years old
  - Thinking in concrete manner
  - Stage related skills



# Cognitive Development

- Early Adolescence
  - Use of complex thinking focused on decision-making that is personal
  - Choices about home, school, peers and relationships.
  - Question authority. Limited in custody.
  - Determines personal appearance



# Cognitive Development

- Middle Adolescence
  - Initiation of an individual code of ethics
  - Increased analysis of issues and concerns
  - Awareness of different possibilities for the development of individual identity (including gender orientation)
  - Recognition of future goals and plans



# Cognitive Development

- Late Adolescence
  - Increased thoughts on more global concepts
  - Development of idealistic views
  - Engage in debate with peers and parents
  - Thinking on career decisions
  - Recognition of role in adult society (including sexual relationships)



# Cognitive Development

- Abstract Thinking
  - Can think about abstract concepts
  - Become able to understand "shades of gray" in situations and examine and express their inner experiences
  - Begin to consider possible outcomes and consequences of actions. This type of thinking is important in long-term planning.



# Cognitive Development

- Problem-Solving
  - The ability to systematically solve a problem in a logical, methodical way emerges
    - quickly plan an organized approach
    - draw conclusions from the information available.



# Cognitive Development

- **Executive Functioning**
  - The set of mental processes that help individuals make connections between past experience and present action
    - planning, organizing, strategizing and paying attention to and remembering details



# Cognitive Development

- Different Executive Functions Include:
  - Inhibition of inappropriate behavioral or emotional responses
  - Ability to think things through.
  - Can switch among problem-solving strategies.
  - Executive functioning is mediated by the prefrontal cortex which continues to develop during adolescence.



# Behavioral Development

## ■ Erik Erikson

- "Growth consists of a series of challenges...Each successive step is a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective...Different capacities use different opportunities to become full-grown components of the ever-new configuration that is the growing personality."

~ Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*



# Behavioral Development

- **Identity vs. Role Confusion (12 to 18 years)**
  - During this stage of psychosocial development individuals:
    - Develop a desire for independence from parents/caregivers as they achieve physical maturity.
    - Are concerned with the question of “who will I become?”
    - Feel inherently insecure about themselves and become highly dependent upon the peer group for support and susceptible to peer pressure.



# Behavioral Development

## ■ **Becoming Autonomous**

- Increased independent functioning
- Increased self-reliance
- Rule and limit testing:



# Behavioral Development

## ■ Sense of Invincibility

- Invincible: incapable of being conquered, overcome, or subdued. More pronounced in high-risk youth.
- Newly enhanced physical and cognitive abilities, combined with increased independence make teenagers feel very powerful.
- Results in risky behaviors because they feel as though consequences will not apply to them.



# Emotional Development

- Three Categories
  - Early Adolescence 12-14 years old
  - Middle Adolescence 14-17 years old
  - Late Adolescence 17-19 years old



# Emotional Development

- Stages of Emotional Development
  - Independence
  - Emotions and Affect
  - Relationships
  - Physical Appearance and Body
  - School, Work, Career
  - Sexuality and Romantic Attachments



# Emotional Development: Early Adolescence

- Independence
  - New sense of identity
- Emotions and Affect
  - Mood swings, enhanced ability to describe emotional state. Compounded by frustrations associated with being incarcerated.
- Relationships
  - Close friendships become important, disrespect, irritability, same-sex friends and activities



# Emotional Development: Early Adolescence

- Physical Appearance and Body
  - Peer group influences interests and clothing
- School, Work, Career
  - Greater ability to work, ethics and self direction established
- Sexuality and Romantic Attachments
  - Girls enter puberty



# Emotional Development: Middle Adolescence

- Independence
  - Independence revealed through self-improvement
- Emotions and Affect
  - Examination of inner-experiences, periods of sadness
- Relationships
  - Protest parental involvement in social life, lowered opinion of parents, efforts to make new friends. Limited in custody.



# Emotional Development: Middle Adolescence

- Physical Appearance and Body
  - Focus and concern with appearance, stranger in one's body
- School, Work, Career
  - More evidence of conscience, greater capacity for setting goals
- Sexuality and Romantic Attachments
  - Concerns about sexuality and sexual attractiveness, sexual energies directed into safe interests



# Emotional Development: Late Adolescence

- Independence
  - Self reliability and independent decision-making. Limited in custody.
- Emotions and Affect
  - Ability to delay gratification, increased emotional stability, self-regulation
- Relationships
  - Greater concern for others, acceptance of family



# Emotional Development: Late Adolescence

- School, Work, Career
  - More defined work habits, stability of interests, pride in one's work, ability to set and follow through with goals
- Sexuality and Romantic Attachments
  - Concern with serious relationships, clear sexual identity, capacity for caring and sensitivity, sensual love



# Adolescent Sexual Development

- Sigmund Freud's Genital Phase of Psychosexual Development
- According to Freud, the genital phase lasts seven years from eleven to eighteen. The person seeks associations with members of his or her own sex and as this period progresses, the heterosexual and homosexual tendencies are more defined.



# **Additional Aspects of Adolescent Sexual Development**

- Display shyness, blushing, modesty, and crushes
- Girls develop sooner than boys
- Increased interest in sex
- Concerns about physical appearance and sexual attractiveness
- Masturbation
- Sexual experimentation. Feelings of love and passion



# Age-Related Sexual Behaviors

- 9-14
  - Experimenting with non-intercourse sexual behavior, increase of oral sex
- 13-17
  - More frequent sexual experimentation and the first intercourse
- 17+
  - Sexual behavior and sexuality may become more related to commitment and future



# Gender-Related Sexual Development

## ■ Females

- Menarche: the first menstrual period
  - From both social and medical perspectives it is often considered the central event of female puberty as it signals the possibility of fertility.
  - Timing of menarche is influenced by both genetic and environmental factors, especially nutritional status.
  - The average age of menarche in the United States is about 12 years and 6 months.



# Gender-Related Sexual Development

## ■ Males

- Spermarche: Male's first ejaculation
  - The male version of menarche.
  - It is usually experienced between the ages of 10 and 14, with a mean age of 13.5.
  - Almost always incited from masturbation or nocturnal emission
  - important stepping in the transition from boyhood to manhood.
  - Most boys unable to sire children immediately after spermarche



# Development and Youth in Custody

- Custody limits adolescent development in unique and specific ways
  - Family and family environment
  - Asserting independence
  - Sexual development is severely limited



# Development and Youth in Custody

- Many, if not most, youth have significant histories of complex trauma. .
- Many lack any appropriate adult role models or healthy, trusted adults.



# Development and Youth in Custody

- BUT Custody provides adolescents with highly-structured environments that include healthy, pro-social adult role models
- Adolescents have an opportunity to develop in ways that are free from high risk behaviors that otherwise interfere with and stunt their growth



# Development and Youth in Custody

- There are limitations on adolescent cognitive development in custody
  - being away from family and the mainstream school.
  
- BUT custodial care can promote:
  - cognitive development by providing a highly structured environment and daily routine with positive adult role models.
  - preventing school absenteeism or high risk behaviors that interfere with cognitive development.