



Working to End Assault & Violence for Everyone

March 16, 2022

Dear Staff, Parents, and Guardians,

My name is Michelle Bickford, and I am the Program Manager for WEAVE (Working to End Assault and Violence for Everyone). WEAVE is a collaboration of service providers in Kent County that specialize in disability services and sexual violence advocacy. The organizations currently involved are YWCA West Central Michigan, MOKA, Thresholds, Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan, and Community Living Services. The mission of WEAVE is to examine and enhance systems for serving individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) to reduce the risk of sexual violence and to better serve and empower individuals with I/DD who have survived sexual assault/abuse. I am writing to share WEAVE's free Healthy Relationships Group for adults with I/DD. The Healthy Relationships Group curriculum empowers participants by giving them tools to stay safe and reduce the risk of experiencing sexual violence. Healthy Relationships is set up in a classroom-style environment with lessons designed specifically for adults with I/DD. We welcome all adults (aged 16 years or older) with I/DD who are excited to come and learn! Healthy Relationships is grant funded and is offered at no charge to participants. Participation in the program will not impact participants' insurance or plans of service. WEAVE currently offers the Healthy Relationships Group multiple times a year.

The fall Healthy Relationships groups will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4-6 pm from September 12, 2022- November 2, 2022. The group will take place at the YWCA; free GO!Bus and Rapid bus tickets are available to assist with transportation. A second group will be offered virtually, using the Zoom platform. The online group will be held on Thursdays from 11-12:30 pm from September 1- November 17, 2022.

The WEAVE team greatly appreciates your help in connecting the people in your life with I/DD to the Healthy Relationships program. Included with this letter is a brochure about the program and the group schedule that we hope you are able to share with individuals with I/DD. Unfortunately, sexual assault/abuse is experienced by people who have disabilities at astounding rates. This level of risk is up to four to ten times more likely if the person's disability is developmental or intellectual in nature. WEAVE created the Healthy Relationships curriculum as an important part of our mission to change these statistics in our community.

If you are interested in more information about Healthy Relationships, you can contact me year-round. I can be reached via email at mbickford@ywcawcmi.org or via phone at 616-426-3752.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Bickford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Bickford, LMSW

WEAVE Program Manager

YWCA West Central Michigan