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May 13, 2024

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To Alabama Public Library Boards:

I am a board-certified practicing pediatrician, and I am writing to you out of concern for the children of the State of Alabama. As you may be aware, the children and adolescents of our country are in the midst of a mental health crisis. Currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death behind accidents for children and young people between the ages of 10 to 24 years old. Anxiety and depression have also risen sharply in the pediatric population. The cause of this mental health crisis is multifactorial, but the oversexualization of children and adolescents is most certainly contributing to this mental health slide.

Within this context of an oversexualized culture, I have researched the effects of the wide acceptance of pornography on children, adults, and families. I am the author of the American College of Pediatricians position paper on the harmful effects of pornography on children and families.¹ My research of this subject is extensive, and a great deal of this research involves how individuals respond to visual and written representations of sexual activities and sexual themes.

For children who are sexually naive, almost any sexual topic is fascinating, and they are attracted to it for its novelty. This is readily apparent when a parent is changing a diaper, and the older sibling of the opposite sex leaps up to watch the diaper change. This effect is magnified exponentially when true sexually provocative material is encountered. Exposure to sexual material by both adults and children increases the viewers' interest in and the seeking of more sexually explicit material. Children who have been exposed to pornography are more likely to be anxious and depressed. They are more likely to have obsessive sexual thoughts and they are more likely to act out sexually against their classmates. Human sexuality is very confusing to children, and they are not prepared to be exposed to the topic when taken out of the context of human reproduction. They simply don't understand what is happening and at the same time they are interested in it. When a

352.376.1877 • admin@acpeds.org
5021 Vernon Ave South, #173, Minneapolis, MN 55436-2102 • www.acpeds.org

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child finds a sexually themed book in the children's section of the library it will create an interest in the sexual theme that they may not have originally had. Also, having this material in a book that is obviously for a child tells the child that they should be interested in this material and that sex is normal for children. This creates the psychic conflict that results in their anxiety, depression, and even sexual obsession. This sexual obsession can increase the likelihood that the child might sexually abuse another person.

For everyone who cares about the mental health and protection of children, they should investigate the website **Defend Young Minds**.² This website includes some anecdotal stories about the tragic results for some children after exposure to sexually explicit material

The child and adolescent mental health crisis is most certainly **not** caused by children not seeing enough sex and sexual material. The sexual revolution has not been kind to children. Most children have been forced to grow up too fast and this includes teaching them about complex sexual themes and ideas. Adults contribute to this by placing sexually themed books in the children's section of libraries. I urge the Alabama public libraries to remove sexually themed books from the children's sections of the libraries and give children a little more innocence as they grow up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. David Perry MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small "MD" written at the end.

L. David Perry, MD, FCP
Board Member of ACPeds

References

1. Impact of Pornography on Children at <https://acpeds.org/position-statements/the-impact-of-pornography-on-children>
2. Defend Young Minds at <https://www.defendyoungminds.com/>