

Growth Attenuation

A Medical Procedure That Isn't Supported by Science

In 2006, two doctors described a procedure called "**growth attenuation therapy.**" This involved using hormones and surgery to stop a young disabled girl from growing into an adult body. The doctors believed keeping her smaller would make her easier to care for.

The AAIDD strongly disagrees with this practice—and has since 2007.

Here's why:

- **No scientific proof it helps.** There is no evidence that this procedure improves the quality of life for the child — either in the short term or long term.
- **It causes real risks.** High doses of hormones can cause dangerous blood clots, and surgery always carries serious risks.
- **It's permanent.** The changes to the child's body cannot be undone.
- **It ignores the child's rights.** The procedure doesn't respect the child's dignity or future potential. Research shows that children with severe disabilities can still learn and grow in ways that are often underestimated.
- **In the original case, it was done without proper oversight.** In the original case, the law was not followed and the proper ethical review boards were not consulted.

The AAIDD believes the real problem is a lack of support for families — not the size of the child. Families who care for children with significant disabilities need better resources, services, and community support. That's where the focus should be.

The solution to caregiving challenges should be better public policies and support systems — not permanent surgery on individual people.
