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Violence Against People With Disabilities and Deaf People 101

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2017 End Abuse of People with Disabilities Webinar
Series

Today, we will...

- > Explore what we know about domestic and sexual violence in the lives of individuals with disabilities and Deaf people.
- > Discuss implications for your work and the field.



What We Know...

- > Incidence & Prevalence
- > Unique Dynamics of Violence
- > Impacts for Survivors with Disabilities
- > Barriers to Access Assistance and Support
- > Opportunities for Change

Incidence and Prevalence



Incidence and Prevalence

- > Limited research exists
- > Research has documented that **some** people with disabilities experience increased risk of domestic and sexual violence compared to people without disabilities
- > Cannot generalize findings to **all** people with disabilities
- > However, persons with disabilities are 14.2% of the population but are **twice** as likely to be a victim of a violent crime*¹

Incidence and Prevalence cont'd...

- > Women who have experienced intimate partner violence are more than twice as likely to also report a disability²
- > 14% of men with disabilities reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their life time compared to 4% of men without disabilities³
- > 49% of people with developmental disabilities were assaulted 10 or more times⁴
- > 20% of Deaf adults have experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner. 15% have experienced forced sex in an intimate partner relationship⁵

Unique Dynamics of Violence



Survivors Often Experience...

- > Fear of retaliation and/ or retribution
- > Fear that they will not be believed
- > Embarrassment or shame
- > Don't know about safe and supportive resources in their community
- > Fear of loss of support system (friends, family, etc.)



Dynamics Unique to People with Disabilities: Cultural

- > Denial of information about healthy relationships
- > Systematic oppression of people with disabilities (isolation, exploitation, marginalization)
- > Lack of confidentiality:
 - Small, close knit communities
 - Guardians
 - Mandatory reporting policies

Dynamics Unique to People with Disabilities: Systems Level

- > Lack of confidentiality due to legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting and guardianship laws
- > Disability organizations are often not equipped to address victimization and support survivors
- > Traditional victim services organizations are often inaccessible and their services are not tailored to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities
- > Response of related systems (APS, criminal justice system)

Dynamics Unique to People with Disabilities: Individual

- > Some perpetrators use tactics that expressly target people with disabilities and Deaf people
- > Fear of institutionalization
- > Loss of personal care and other services
- > Lack of accessible transportation
- > May not know what they experienced is abusive and/or criminal
- > May have experienced violence throughout their lives by multiple perpetrators

Perpetrators



Perpetrators

- > The vast majority of perpetrators are known and hold positions of power or authority
- > 44% of perpetrators have a relationship with the individual because of their disability⁶
- > Caregivers
- > Attendants
- > Drivers
- > Family members
- > Partners, Girlfriends, Boyfriends
- > Acquaintances

Perpetrator Tactics (Sexual Violence)

- > “Grooming” for abuse
- > Exploiting trusting nature
- > Taking advantage of denial of sexual education or knowledge
- > Targeting them for perceived vulnerabilities
- > Becoming a relied-upon, or primary, caregiver before beginning the abuse

Perpetrator Tactics (Domestic Violence)

- > Becoming a relied-upon, or primary, caregiver before beginning the abuse
- > Giving her drugs without her knowledge, forcing her to take drugs or medication, or giving her more than was prescribed
- > Threatening, injuring or scaring away service animal
- > Using transportation options for stalking route
- > Hiding mobility devices or putting them right out of her reach
- > Attacking before she can sense what is coming.
- > Threatening, injuring or scaring away her service animal

Perpetrator Tactics (Domestic Violence and Deaf People)

- > Exploiting the smallness of the Deaf community
- > Stealing or destroying communication or adaptive equipment so the individual can't call for help
- > Using hearing privilege



Impact and Barriers



Impact for Survivors with Disabilities

- > Loss of autonomy, independence
 - System may respond by removing personal care attendant, changing housing, appointing a guardian because they cannot protect themselves
- > Psychological impact
 - PTSD, rape trauma syndrome, trauma responses such as “flight, fight, or freeze”
- > Physical impact
 - Exacerbation of disability

Barriers to Access Assistance and Support

- > Barriers exist in domestic and sexual violence programs, health care settings, the criminal justice system, and other areas for these survivors.
 - Physical barriers
 - Communication barriers
 - Attitudinal barriers
- > Service providers may lack knowledge of disability in general
- > Policies in place may prevent survivors with disabilities from using the services

Barriers to Access Assistance and Support, con't...

- > Barriers exist in disability programs for survivors
- > Barriers to disclosures of violence and abuse
- > Mandatory reports
- > Lack of privacy at intake
- > Serving both abusers and survivors
- > Fewer transportation options may impact safety planning



Barriers for Deaf Survivors

- > Barriers exist in serving Deaf survivors
- > Community of ASL interpreters is often small and tight knit
- > Disability services may not have strong connection to the Deaf community
- > Deaf services may focus exclusively on communication access – not fully on the range of violence and abuse
- > Crisis line workers may be unfamiliar with TTY or VRS
- > Access to Deaf Advocates or Certified Deaf Interpreters may be limited
- > Sense of isolation when living in a shelter
- > Lack of understanding of Deaf Culture

Strategies for Change



General Strategies for Change

- > Promote equality and create inclusion
- > Build partnerships
- > Raise awareness and foster accountability
- > Strengthen prevention
- > Increase research and evaluation
- > Enhance Services



Strategies for Change in Your Community

- > Advocate to ensure other community resources are accessible
- > Advocate to ensure other community resources are safe and welcoming
- > Promote partnerships between violence against women agencies and disability and Deaf organizations

COMMUNITY



Strategies for Change Within Your Violence Against Women Organization

- > Provide reasonable accommodations
- > Budget for accessibility
- > Make sure services are accessible
- > Enhance policies to be welcoming and inclusive of women with disabilities and Deaf women
- > Make agency materials available in alternative formats
- > Incorporate disability and Deaf – specific images and information in program materials
- > Use welcoming and inclusive language



Strategies for Change Within Your Disability Organization

- > Create a private space to discuss her experiences/needs
- > Enhance policies to be welcoming and inclusive of women with disabilities and Deaf women
- > Ensure that you are conveying that environment is safe

ALL organizations can also...

- > Actively recruit and retain board members, staff, and volunteers who have disabilities
- > Provide on-going training opportunities on violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women

Strategies When Providing Services to Survivors with Disabilities and Deaf Survivors

- > Avoid victim-blaming language
- > Focus on her as a whole person
- > Be flexible and allow for more time
- > Ask how you can best meet her needs
- > Include line items that would allow for emergency housing or other safety planning needs
- > Indicate safe ways to talk about violence or abuse in your program materials
- > Tailor programming to meet the unique realities, perpetrator tactics, and barriers
- > Follow basic etiquette for interacting with people with disabilities and Deaf people

National Resources

- > End Abuse of People with Disabilities website: www.endabusepwd.org
- > National Council on Independent Living, Task Force on Violence and Abuse of People with Disabilities: www.ncil.org
- > U.S. Department of Justice's ADA home page: www.ada.gov
- > National Sexual Violence Resource Center: www.nsvrc.org
- > Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center: www.dbtac.vcu.edu
- > National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.ncadv.org
- > Job Accommodation Network: www.jan.wvu.edu

Citations

- 1 National Center for Victims of Crime (2016). “Crimes Against Persons with Disabilities” https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2016/content/section-6/PDF/2016NCVRW_6_PersonsWithDisabilities-508.pdf
- 2 Corker, Ann L., Smith, Paige H., and Fadden, Mary K. (2005). “Intimate Partner Violence and Disabilities Among Women Attending Family Practice Clinics. *Journal of Women’s Health*, 14(9): 829-838.
- 3 2005-2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>
- 4 Sobsey, D. & Doe, T. (1991). Patterns of sexual abuse and assault. *Sexuality and Disability*, 9 (3), 243-259.
- 5 Harrell, E. (2015). Crimes against persons with disabilities, 2009–2013 – statistical tables. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 248676. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0913st.pdf>
- 6 Balderian, N. (1991). Sexual abuse of people with developmental disabilities. *Sexuality and Disability*, 9(4), 323-335.

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