

SURVIVORS WITH *disabilities*

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

People with disabilities:

- Have a higher lifetime prevalence of experiencing abuse
- Experience violent crime at twice the rate of people without disabilities
- Are three times as likely to be sexually assaulted as their peers without disabilities

WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE FOR A SURVIVOR WITH A DISABILITY?

Survivors with disabilities experience many of the same kinds of abuse. However, there are some unique to this population due to their limitations and/or reliance on others for care:

- Verbal and psychological abuse
- Physical violence
- Unwanted sexual contact
- Threats and intimidation
- Neglect
- Physically harming service animals
- Withholding medications
- Isolation
- Deprivation of necessary physical accommodations
- Withholding or destroying assistive devices such as wheelchairs
- Financially exploiting them and misusing their money

WHY IT MATTERS

The term “disability” encompasses many forms and degrees of impairments, including physical, developmental, and psychological disabilities.

Survivors with disabilities are uniquely vulnerable to all forms of violence, including intimate partner violence. They are significantly more likely to experience physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and stalking than their peers without disabilities. Female survivors are also more likely to experience intimate partner control of reproductive and sexual health than women without disabilities. Men with disabilities are more likely to experience stalking and psychological abuse than their peers without disabilities.

Furthermore, violence against people with disabilities is not recognized by society to be a significant problem, and the needs of victims and survivors are often ignored. Barriers to accessing services compound the impact of violence against people with disabilities.

HOW TO HELP

One of the most effective ways to assist survivors of domestic violence with disabilities is to make resources more available and inclusive:

- Encourage local shelters and hotlines to specifically train staff to work with victims and survivors with disabilities.
- Encourage shelters, social service agencies, and hospitals to develop a referral list of organizations in the area that specialize in the intersection of domestic violence and disability.
- Ensure local health care professionals are properly screening patients with disabilities for domestic violence.
- Educate staff at social service agencies that assist people with disabilities to recognize the signs of domestic violence and to respond appropriately.
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- Encourage social service agencies, hospitals, houses of worship, and other organizations to have domestic violence information and resources available and visibly displayed that are oriented to populations with specific disabilities (people who are blind, people who are deaf, people with limited mobility, people with mental illness, people with development disabilities, etc.).

Alternatives Incorporated strives to provide high quality services for survivors with disabilities. This includes connecting them with other area organizations who may be better equipped to assist with their disability while Alternatives Inc. provides advocacy and support related to the abuse they have experienced.

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