

**WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, and emotional abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically.

**WHAT IS A DISABILITY?**

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).

“There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person’s: Vision, Movement, Thinking, Remembering, Learning, Communicating, Hearing, Mental health, [and] social relationships. Although “people with disabilities” sometimes refers to a single population, this is actually a diverse group of people with a wide range of needs. Two people with the same type of disability can be affected in very different ways. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see.”<sup>1</sup>

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- 23.8% of women and 20.1% of men in the United States have a disability.<sup>2</sup>
- Women with disabilities experience intimate partner violence at twice the rate of other populations.<sup>3</sup>
- A CDC study found that, in addition to experiencing intimate partner violence at a higher lifetime rate, in the previous twelve months, when controlling for other factors:
  - Women with disabilities were more likely to have experienced intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence, intimate partner stalking and intimate partner psychological aggression than their non-disabled peers;<sup>4</sup>
  - Men with disabilities were more likely to have experienced intimate partner stalking and intimate partner psychological aggression than their non-disabled peers.<sup>5</sup>
- Women with disabilities may feel more isolated than women without disabilities and feel they cannot report abuse as they may be dependent on the abuser for their care.<sup>6</sup>
- A survey conducted by the Spectrum Institute Disability and Abuse Project found that 70% of respondents with disabilities experienced some form of abuse by an intimate partner, family member, caregiver, acquaintance or stranger. Of those:
  - 87.2% experienced verbal/emotional abuse
  - 50.6% experienced physical abuse
  - 41.6% experienced sexual abuse
  - 37.4% experienced neglect
  - 31.5% experienced financial abuse

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If you are in crisis, contact The National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** or [www.TheHotline.org](http://www.TheHotline.org).

Please visit the **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence’s** website at [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org) for more fact sheets, membership information, and valuable resources.

## People with Disabilities and Domestic Violence

- 37.3% reported the abuse to law enforcement
- Alleged perpetrators were arrested in 10% of abuse cases reported to law enforcement.<sup>7</sup>
- 12% of people in the US have disabilities, yet from 2017 to 2019, persons with disabilities were victims of 26% of nonfatal violent crime.<sup>8</sup>
- Between 2017 and 2019, the rate of violence against individuals with disabilities was almost four times the rate for individuals without a disability.<sup>9</sup>
- People with disabilities who experience violence are more likely to experience violence at the hands of someone they know than people without disabilities.<sup>10</sup>
- People of all genders with intellectual disabilities are seven times more likely to experience sexual violence than people without disabilities, and women with disabilities are twelve times more likely to experience sexual violence.<sup>11</sup>
- In a study conducted in 2010, 87% of individuals with disabilities who had been sexually abused were abused by caregivers or service providers.<sup>12</sup>
- Nineteen percent of rapes or sexual assaults against persons with disabilities were reported to police, compared to 36% of those against persons without disabilities.<sup>13</sup>

### WHAT DOES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LOOK LIKE FOR A VICTIM WITH A DISABILITY?

- Verbal and psychological abuse
- Physical violence
- Unwanted sexual contact
- Threats and intimidation
- Neglect
- Withholding medications
- Physically harming service animals
- Isolating victims
- Depriving victims of necessary physical accommodations
- Withholding or destroying assistive devices such as wheelchairs
- Financially exploiting victims and misusing victims' money<sup>14</sup>

### HOW TO HELP

**One of the most effective ways to assist victims 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.

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## People with Disabilities and Domestic Violence

- Educate staff at social service agencies that assist people with disabilities to recognize the signs of domestic violence and to respond appropriately.
- Educate agencies that are responsible for oversight of service providers about the prevalence of abuse of individuals in care.
- 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, Deaf people, people with limited mobility, people with mental illness, people with developmental disabilities, etc.),

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Disability and Health Promotion. *Disability and health overview*.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>

<sup>2</sup> Breiding, M.J., Armour, B.S. (2015). The association between disability and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 25(6), 455-457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2015.03.017>

<sup>3</sup> Smith, D. L. (2007). Disability, gender and intimate partner violence: Relationships from the behavior risk factor surveillance system. *Sexuality and Disability*, 26, 15-28. DOI 10.1007/s11195-007-9064-6

<sup>4</sup> Breiding, M.J., Armour, B.S. (2015). The association between disability and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 25(6), 455-457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2015.03.017>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Breiding, M.J., Armour, B.S. (2015). The association between disability and intimate partner violence in the United States. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 25(6), 455-457. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2015.03.017>

<sup>7</sup> Baladerian, N. J., Coleman, T. F. & Stream, J. (2013). *Abuse of people with disabilities: Victims and their families speak out*. <http://disability-abuse.com/survey/survey-report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Harrell, E. (2021). *Crime against persons with disabilities, 2009-2019 - statistical tables*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0919st.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Shapiro, J. (2018, January 8). *The sexual assault epidemic no one talks about* [Radio broadcast transcript]. National Public Radio.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>

<sup>12</sup> Bowman, R. A., Scotti, J. R., & Morris, T. L. (2010). Sexual abuse prevention: A training program for developmental disabilities service providers. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19(2), 119-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538711003614718>

<sup>13</sup> Harrell, E. (2021). *Crime against persons with disabilities, 2009-2019 - statistical tables*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0919st.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2016). *Working with survivors: Disability community*. <http://www.wcsap.org/disability-community>

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