

When serving a client with a disability, sexual violence advocates should follow these guidelines:

- Regard the client as an equal individual. Reject the societal view that a person with a disability needs to be “fixed.”
- Assume that all people with disabilities are capable. Help each client identify her/his strengths and capacities and build on them.
- Respect the client’s struggle as well as her/his strength as a survivor.
- Allow the client to identify issues to address. Don’t assume that the issues are disability-related.
- Accept and defend the right of all people with disabilities to control their own lives.

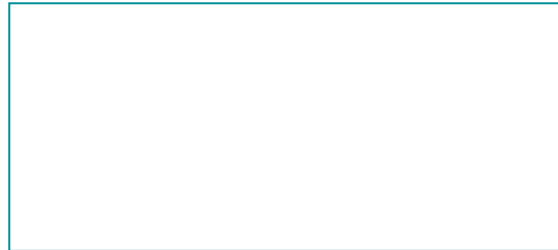
What resources are available to assist sexual violence agencies to better serve survivors with disabilities?

NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault
1-888-737-2272 (Voice)
nccasa@nccasa.org
www.nccasa.org

NC Office on Disability and Health
919-843-3882 (Voice)
919-843-3531 (TTY)
nobles@mail.fpg.unc.edu
www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/

SafePlace of Austin, TX
512-267-SAFE (24-hour hotline)
512-927-9616 (TTY)
www.austin-safeplace.org

Insert local program information here:



Whenever possible, NCCASA will make this brochure available in alternate formats (such as large print, audio, diskette) upon request.

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Sexual Violence and People with Disabilities



North Carolina Coalition
Against Sexual Assault

Did you know?

- At least 76% of adults with cognitive disabilities have been sexually assaulted. ¹
- Ninety-five percent of violent episodes against people with disabilities involve sexual violence. ²
- Persons with disabilities in North Carolina experience sexual assault at a rate 5 times higher than persons without disabilities. ³

What is disability?

Disability can be a physical, mental health, cognitive, or sensory condition that limits walking, thinking, seeing, talking, hearing, and/or everyday activities.



How might people with disabilities be vulnerable to sexual violence? ⁴

People with disabilities may:

- Be less able to escape violent situations
- Be overly trusting of others and be easier to trick, bribe, or coerce
- Experience difficulty reporting abuse due to communication barriers
- Grow up without sexuality education or abuse prevention information
- Depend on others for personal care, which increases opportunity for abuse
- Lack knowledge about their bodies or healthy relationships
- Feel unworthy, not trust their instincts, or misinterpret others' intentions
- Be perceived by offenders as easy targets

¹National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1996

²Beail & Warden, 1995

³Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2001

⁴Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program) of SafePlace in Austin, Texas

What other types of abuse may people with disabilities experience along with the sexual violence?

- Taunting about the disability
- Withholding access to communication (not allowing sign language interpreters or use of relay phone services)
- Threatening to place the person in a residential facility
- Withholding personal care and medications
- Removing access to assistive devices such as wheelchairs or walkers

How can sexual violence agencies better serve people with disabilities?

During intake, all clients should be asked the following question: "We are working to become more accessible. Will you need any assistance while receiving services from our agency?" If the person requires simpler language, ask "Will you need any extra help?" Listen to any instructions the person may give about how you can assist. Examples might include helping the client enter the building, providing large print materials, or requesting accommodations during medical or court procedures.