

To Empower and Protect:

Exploring the Realities of Responding to Abuse of People with Disabilities

Nancy Smith & Sandra Harrell
Center on Victimization and Safety
Vera Institute of Justice

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Training Goals

- Summarize what is known about violent victimization, including sexual assault and domestic abuse, and the unique victimization issues experienced by survivors with disabilities;
- Identify key barriers to effective, person-centered intervention and support; and,
- Engage in dialogue to explore the complexities that surround the intersection of mandatory reporting, autonomy, and violence in the lives of people with disabilities.

About us

Vera Institute of Justice, Center on Victimization and Safety



Our mission

- > Work to create victim services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims of crime.
- > Focus on groups of people who are at elevated risk of harm but who are underserved.
- > Cornerstone of our work is addressing abuse of people with disabilities
- > Work began in 2005

Our goals

- > Promote a framework for understanding, responding to, and ending domestic and sexual violence that accounts for disability;
- > Build and strengthen a diverse, inclusive, and coordinated movement working to end abuse of people with disabilities;
- > Enhance capacity to prevent and respond to violence against people with disabilities; and
- > Increase the availability and use of research and evaluation in these efforts.

Our approach

- > Encourage dialogue and raise awareness
- > Foster partnerships
- > Provide training and guidance
- > Promote effective policy
- > Conduct research

Our projects

- > National Resource Center on Survivors with Disabilities and Deaf Survivors
- > Accessing Safety Initiative
- > Understanding and Preventing Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities
- > Measuring Capacity to Serve Survivors with Disabilities
- > Uniting to End Violence Against People with Disabilities
- > www.endabusepwd.org
- > DeafAction
- > Translating Justice

About you

Name • City, State

Agency • Role

Abuse of people with disabilities

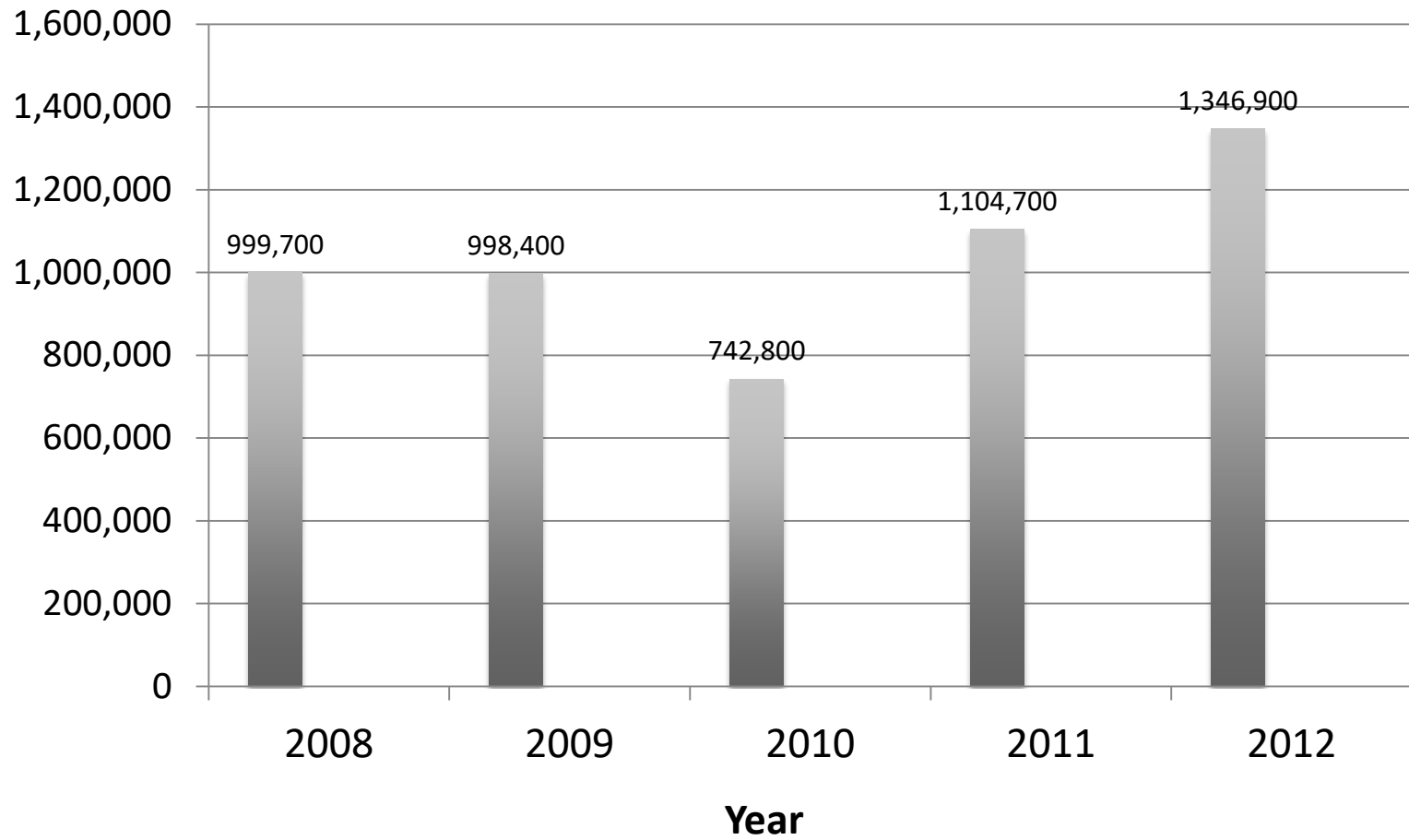
What the research tells us



What the research tells us

- > Limited research exists
- > Research has documented that people with disabilities experience increased risk of violent victimization
- > **Some** people with disabilities experience increased risk of domestic and sexual violence when compared to people without disabilities
- > Cannot generalize findings to **all** people with disabilities

Violent crimes against people with disabilities



People with disabilities are at greater risk of violence.



People with disabilities are three times more likely to experience rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and robbery than those without disabilities.

Risk of violence is higher for certain people with disabilities.

>People with intellectual or cognitive disabilities

>People with psychiatric disabilities

>People with multiple disabilities

>Women with disabilities

>People of color who have disabilities





Additional statistics

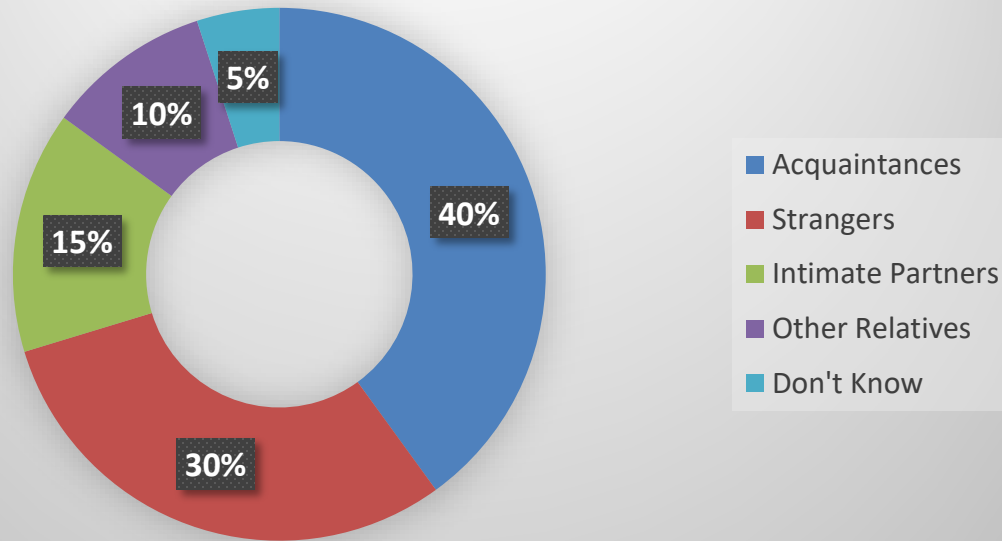
- > Women who have experienced intimate partner violence are more than twice as likely to also report a disability.²
- > 14% of men with disabilities reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their life time compared to 4% of men without disabilities.³
- > 49% of people with developmental disabilities were assaulted 10 or more times.⁴
- > 20% of Deaf adults have experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner. 15% have experienced forced sex in an intimate partner relationship.⁵

Why?

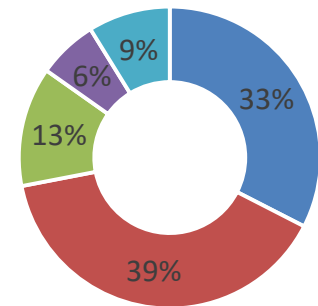
- > Devaluation
- > Presumed lack of credibility
- > Isolation and segregation
- > Increased exposure to potential abusers
- > Culture of compliance
- > Seen as “easy targets”
- > Doubly silenced

Who is responsible?

Survivors with Disabilities
Offender Relationship, 2011-2015

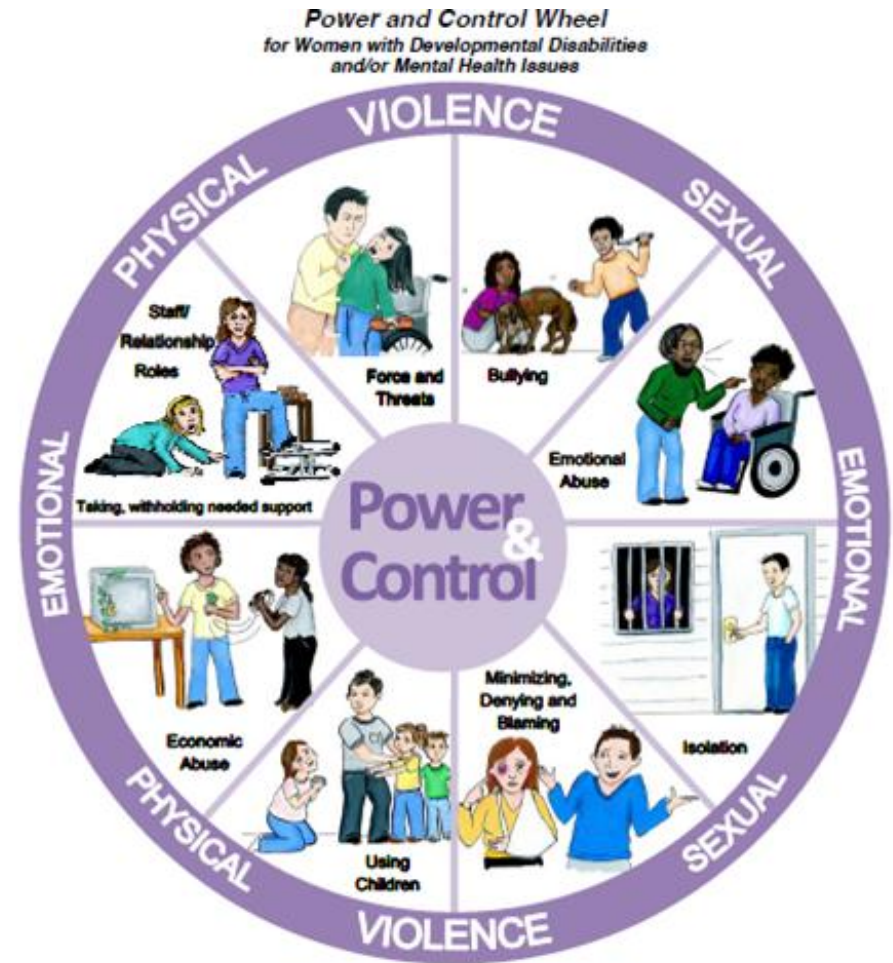


Survivors without Disabilities
Offender Relationship



Abuse of people with disabilities has unique dynamics.

- >Withholding medication
- >Delaying or refusing to provide care
- >Abusing or threatening to abuse a service animal
- >Threatening to move a person to a nursing home or institution



Learning from your experiences

What do you see?

Discussion questions

- > How often are you seeing victims with disabilities in your work?
- > What trends do you see around victims with disabilities?
 - > What types of disabilities are most common?
 - > What type of victimization/abuse is most common?
 - > Who is often responsible?

Reaching out: healing and justice

What the research tells us

Significant underreporting

**Violent crimes
reported to police**



- > Silence feels safer/less harmful
- > Loss of independence and fear of institutionalization
- > Lack of knowledge about healthy sexuality and safety
- > Loss of autonomy
- > Lack of effective criminal justice response
- > Don't know how to report/reach out for help

Victim services are out of reach.

Only 13% of victims of violent crime with disabilities receive support from victim services.

Barriers to victim services

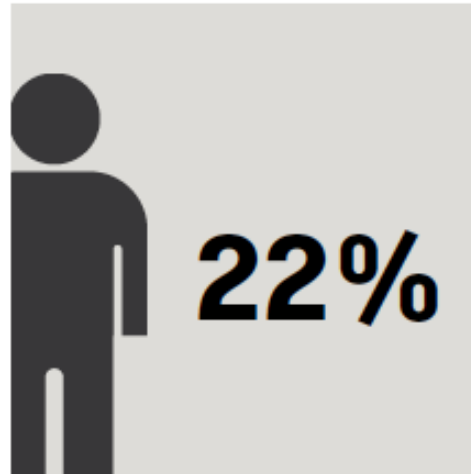
- > Limited to no specialized outreach to survivors with disabilities;
- > Physical, communication, programmatic and attitudinal barriers in anti-violence programs;
- > Lack of specialized knowledge and response protocols to survivors in disability organizations; and
- > Lack of coordination between anti-violence and disability organizations.

Justice is out of reach for many.

**Violent crimes
reported to police**



**People charged
with an offense**



**People convicted
of the offense**



Barriers to justice

- > Perceived lack of credibility
- > Lack of accommodations
- > Lack of specialized training for law enforcement and prosecutors

Discussion

- > What is your response to victims with disabilities?
- > What barriers, if any, do victims with disabilities face when involved with APS?
- > What trends do you see in terms of outcomes for cases involving victims with disabilities?

What is the role and impact of mandatory reporting?

Discussion

What are the benefits of mandatory reporting?

Benefits: Making a report can...

- Promote early identification of vulnerable adults
- Break isolation
- Provide victims with information about safety planning, legal and community services
- Provide victims with local/state advocacy services
- Recognize that the adult has the right to self-determination and may accept or refuse services
- Provide a 'continuum of care' for victims in coordination with other agencies and enhances effectiveness of interventions
- Create documentation of the maltreatment that may be critical to criminal or civil legal action

Discussion

What are the drawbacks of mandatory reporting?

Drawbacks: Making a report may result in...

- Loss of independence (individual placed in a restrictive environment, payee is assigned, etc.)
- Removal of the individual's rights (assigning a guardian)
- Loss of trust/feelings of betrayal toward reporter
- Increase risk
- Nothing-report is unsubstantiated

Mandated Reporting Quandaries

- Misunderstanding about what will happen
- Unaware of the law
- Victim/service provider rapport
- Suspected abuse is subjective
- Effects of reporting – will it increase or decrease quality of life?

Mandated Reporting Quandaries

- Possible negative outcome from report
- Investigator's experience in interviewing, safety planning, protecting, etc.
- Lack of funding, options etc. for intervention
- Liability: Not making report vs. making a report
- Philosophical differences

Discussion

Where do you experience tensions between protecting the safety of the person with their right to self-determination?

Discussion cont'd...

What strategies do you use to balance protection/safety and self-determination?

Building Capacity to Serve Survivors with Disabilities

- Cultivate relationships with disability organizations
- Identify informed and accessible victim service providers
- Ensure familiarity with common accommodations and how to secure them
- Provide ongoing training on the unique ways in which abuse of people with disabilities present themselves

Tips for Serving Survivors with Disabilities

- Tailor interviews to account for access needs
- Set processes for securing qualified interpreters and expectations for how to interact with interpreters
- Establish expectations for the collection of collateral information about a person's disability and communication needs from non-offending support persons
- Require the provision of disability-specific services referrals for adults with disabilities, even if the report is deemed unsubstantiated.

Contact Information

Center on Victimization and Safety
Vera Institute of Justice

End Abuse of People with Disabilities Website:
www.endabusepwd.org

Nancy Smith
(917) 535-7564
nsmith@vera.org

Sandra Harrell
(917) 478-4590
sharrell@vera.org