

# Peer Support Leaders:

*How Peer Support can help APS  
Respond to Sexual Abuse*

Patty Quatieri, Peer Support Leader  
Sexual Assault Response Unit  
Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission

Kecia Weller, Peer Advisor and Advocate  
Board Resource Center

# Patty Quatieri



I am a professional woman who has a developmental disability

Sexual assault survivor

Self- advocate

Peer Support Leader

# Kecia Weller



Disability and sexual assault awareness  
speaker, advocate and blogger



# Goals Today

- Understand the needs of sexual assault victims with I/DD for support
- Learn why Peer Support is an important part of Trauma-Informed approach within APS
- Learn SAMSHA's Principles of Trauma-Informed work
- Learn how to talk about trauma with survivors



# Agenda

- Putting a Face on Abuse  
*Patty and Kecia*
- Sexual Abuse Epidemic  
*What the data tells us*
- Trauma-Informed Model for APS  
*Principles of Trauma-Informed Approach*  
*Peer Support*
- Next Steps  
*1<sup>st</sup> Annual Convening Outcomes*
- Question and Answers

## Patty: Turning Lemons into Lemonade!

It's important for you to know that I am a person with disabilities. I have Cerebral Palsy, I am deaf in my right ear, and I have an intellectual disability.

**How my disabilities affect me:**

- 1) Sometimes I need to use a FM listening device in order to hear more clearly. This makes me feel uncomfortable because I think people are staring at me and don't know what the device is for.

# Continued

## 2) My Cerebral Palsy:

- Causes me to drool, cough, and sometimes choke on my saliva
- Affects my speech
- Makes me feel tired
- Makes it hard for me to move my hands and legs
- Makes it hard for me to express my thoughts

All of these things make me feel uncomfortable because I think people sometimes only see my disabilities.

# Continued

- 3) Having disabilities sometimes makes me feel frustrated and angry, and say things I don't mean.
- 4) How I take care of myself...and turn lemons into lemonade!!
- Think positive thoughts
  - Listen to music
  - Do crafts like knitting
  - Laugh and use my sense of humor
  - Talk to people I trust
  - Try to help other people with disabilities



# Continued

## Teaching Tools:

What you can do to assist people with disabilities:

- Be patient
- Take your time listening
- Believe them when they share difficult information
- Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat what they said if you don't understand
- Take time to learn about different types of disabilities
- Learn about assistive devices that can help
- Be sure to speak clearly

All of these things can help people with disabilities  
to be more independent, happier,  
and have better quality in their lives!!!

## Overcoming Being Uncomfortable

- ▶ In my experience, people with disabilities are uncomfortable with certain parts of their disability.
- ▶ I will empower my peers to name those uncomfortable feelings, and use their voices to feel better and educate their supports.



**Abused and Betrayed Series:**  
The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About



2.18

# Kecia's Story



Sexual assault survivor

My passion is to help other survivors be free from abuse.

Encourage organizations and agencies to work with each other to prevent abuse

# My #MeToo Story



- I was confused because I thought I could trust him
  - The system failed me!
- I should be able to get support I need from the system that is set up for people with disabilities

# Important To Me

- **Pay forward:** Help survivors overcome the cycle of abuse
- **Legislation:** New laws to protect us and make it easier to report
- **Education:** Increase awareness of how often abuse happens to people with disabilities

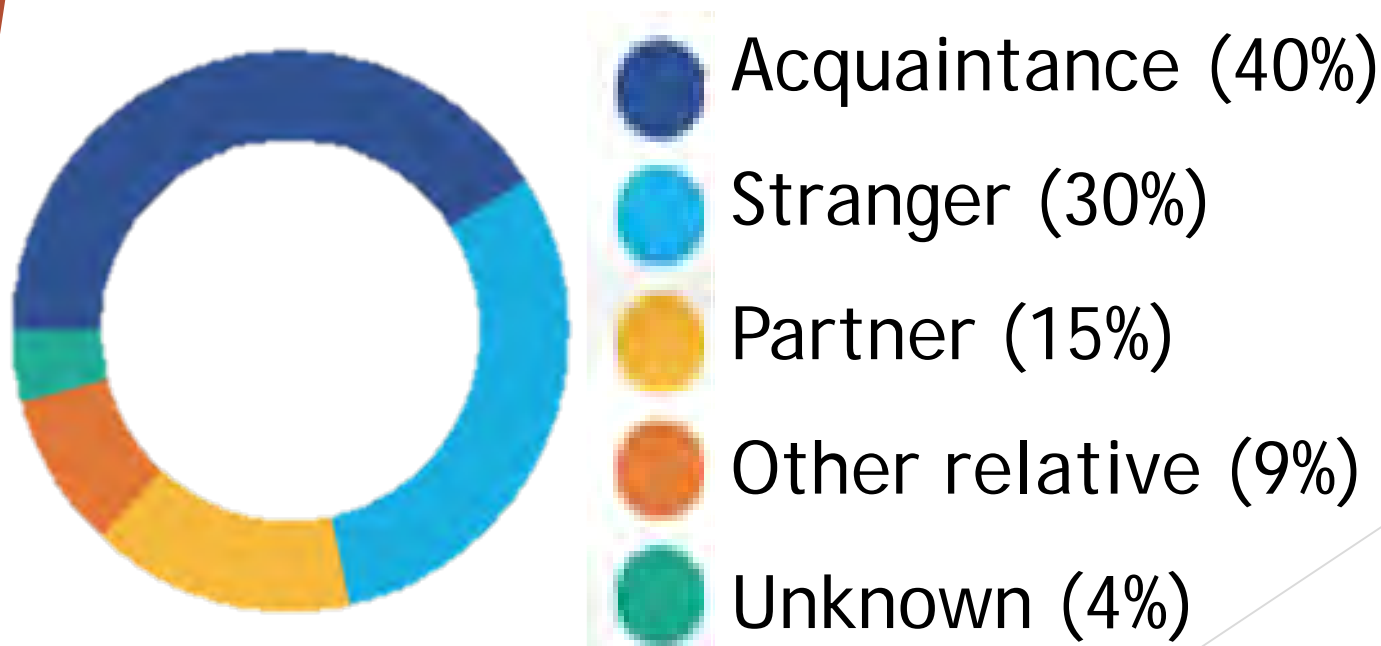
# Abuse Epidemic

## Sexual Assault Rates Among People With Developmental Disabilities 2011-2015



# Abuse Epidemic

Who Commits the Abuse?





# Abuse Epidemic

## Reporting Dilemma for People with Disabilities



# Advocacy Efforts



California

Silence = Violence Statewide Network

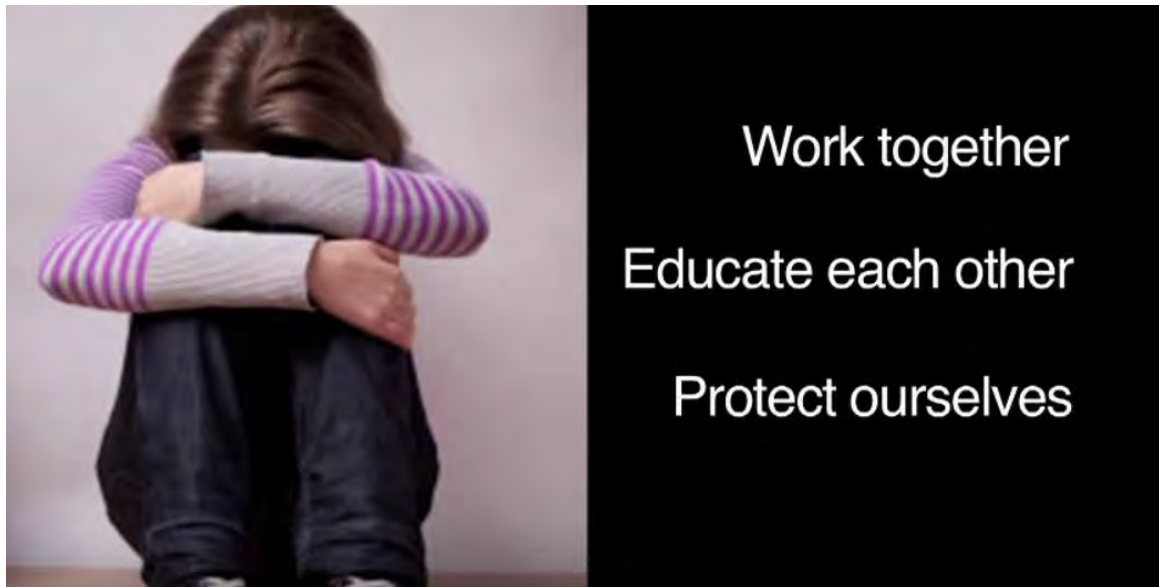
Disability Conference: Abuse Awareness Track

Talk about Sexual Violence Project

Advocacy organizations beginning to include abuse awareness and prevention conversations

# Advocacy

## Abuse of People with Disabilities *A Silent Epidemic*



Public Service Announcement  
Co-produced by Kecia Weller

## Trauma-Informed Model

**What does it mean to  
be Trauma Informed?**

What are the 3 R's of the Trauma Informed Approach?

## SAMHSA: A Trauma Informed APS Approach

- **R**earizes the widespread (everywhere) impact of trauma and understands paths for healing;
- **R**ecognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in people;
- **R**esponds by integrating (combining) trauma knowledge into policies, procedures and practices; and

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

What are the important parts for Trauma Informed Care?

## SAMSHA's Six Key Principles

- Safety (emotional and physical)
- Trustworthiness (dependability) and Transparency (clarity)
- Peer support
- Collaboration (working together)
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

So how does this apply to APS?

## What does it mean for APS to be Trauma-Informed? *(my words)*

- Know how to recognize signs of trauma.
- Understand pathways of healing from trauma.
- Try to avoid re-traumatizing (causing more trauma) a survivor.

*(example, if someone blames you for what happened, it is harder to recover.)*

So, what are some of the signs and symptoms of trauma?

## Signs and Symptoms of Trauma (*my words*)

- Behavior changes (*example: not eating, hitting, angry or sad*)
- Being alone too much
- Not feeling safe outside, staying in room
- Not talking about what happened
- No trust
- Extreme emotions with unknown reason (triggers)



Can you tell us more about triggers?

## Understand Triggers

- Things can trigger bad reactions if they remind the person of the assault
- The survivor may not be aware of what triggered a bad reaction.

*(touch, smell, sound, attitude, bus, movie)*

- **Example:**

I may have a trigger if there is a loud noise behind me such as a door slamming.

## My recommendations for APS responders:

- START by BELIEVING.
- Make words simple so anyone can understand
- Understand that survivors need support
- Ask the survivor who he/she trusts and talk about getting support
- Collaborations (working together) and Teamwork make a big difference
- Always provide resources

# Peer Support Program





# Patty's Job Responsibilities

## Peer Support Leader

- As a Peer Support Leader, I work with a team of Navigators to make sure my peers have access to resources
- I am creating a National Peer Support Network at this conference with Kecia
- I share my survivor story through public speaking at events, conferences, and trainings throughout the state of Massachusetts

# Patty's Job Responsibilities

- As Peer Support Leader, I train other professionals on how to work with people with disabilities
- (Rape Crisis Center, DDS, Clinicians, Law Enforcement)
- I am currently involved in a project with Worcester Polytech Institute (WPI) that is creating technology to increase accessibility for reporting abuse
- I engage in peer-to-peer support with sexual assault survivors with disabilities
- I enjoy researching and learning more about trauma informed care in order to help my peers

# My Next Steps



1. Include Peer Leaders as part of APS teams
2. Encourage professionals NOT to be afraid to talk about trauma. People with disabilities experience trauma just like people that don't have disabilities.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Convening

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**August 19, 2019 – Denver, Colorado**

***Please join Kecia and me at the convening***

PSA Video  
Announcing Convening



We talked about:

- Problems connected with reducing sexual abuse against persons with disabilities
- Trauma-informed care and new Peer Support practices
- How to move trauma-informed care forward.
- Starting a Peer Support National Network to address sexual violence.



# Kecia's Recommendations

1. Make the Convening a reality each year.
2. Include people with disabilities in the #Me Too movement
3. Increase awareness that abuse also happens to men with disabilities.

# Contact Information

**Patty Quatieri**

Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC)

[patricia.quatieri@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:patricia.quatieri@massmail.state.ma.us)

**Kecia Weller**

Board Resource Center

[kweller2@me.com](mailto:kweller2@me.com)

# National Resources

## **National Webinar May 2018: The Arc of New Jersey**

Empowering People with Disabilities to Recognize and Report Abuse

<https://vimeo.com/271839143>

## **National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability website:**

<https://www.thearc.org/NCCJD/resources/by-audience/self-advocates>

## **NPR: The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About**

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

## **World Institute on Disability:**

Curriculum on Self-Protection for People with Disabilities and Elders  
Living Independently

<https://worldinstituteondisabilityblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/cap-e-complete.pdf>

# MA Resources

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## Peer Support Flyer: (Sexual Assault Response Unit)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1soZaKowFxFH\\_NgToriVE\\_XBb78rQgQupy/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1soZaKowFxFH_NgToriVE_XBb78rQgQupy/view?usp=sharing)

## Guidelines for MA Rape Crisis Centers Working with Survivors with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1izyuxuv-MX161UlgUJyirahy\\_hJ7Bu5U/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1izyuxuv-MX161UlgUJyirahy_hJ7Bu5U/view?usp=sharing)

## SAMSHA Trauma-Informed Care Principles (Adapted)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uHYKUd1X9RXXbvqTuNBcJ2gC9EJq4jxg/view?usp=sharing>

# MA Resources

## Video: On-line Survivor Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZvXNTARu8I>

## Webinars:

Communication Strategies for staff working with Sexual Assault Survivors with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities <https://youtu.be/0PHrZSB7TBg>

Sexual Decision-Making among Adults with I/DD

<https://youtu.be/m8pIF5KTpBY>

Guidelines for Massachusetts Rape Crisis Centers: Working with Survivors with I/DD <https://youtu.be/XN5xEKA9kqY>

# Questions

