

Did you know?

- 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime
- 32% of males with disabilities are victims of sexual assault
- Only 3% of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental disabilities are ever reported
- 33% of abusers are friends or acquaintances, 33% are natural or foster family members, and 25% are caregivers or service providers.
- Of the women with disabilities who have been married, 38% experienced sexual violence by their partner

STATEWIDE SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS
RESPONSE HOTLINE
1-800-977-5776

Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault

200 River Market Avenue, Suite 100
501-246-3276
1-866-63-ACASA (22272)
www.acasa.us

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***Sexual
Abuse
And
Persons
With
Disabilities***



What is Sexual Abuse of Persons with Disabilities?

Sexual abuse includes a wide range of sexual activities that are forced upon someone.

Sexual abuse consists of sexually inappropriate and non-consensual actions, such as exposure to sexual materials (such as pornography), the use of inappropriate sexual remarks/language, not respecting the privacy (physical boundaries) of a child or individual (e.g., walking in on someone while dressing or in the bathroom), fondling, exhibitionism, oral sex and forced sexual intercourse (rape).

People with disabilities are often unable to stop abuse due to lack of understanding of what is happening during abuse, the extreme pressure to give in out of fear, a need of acceptance from the abuser or feeling dependent upon the abuser.

It can include any sexual activity with an elderly disabled adult or child by a caregiver, either while providing service for which he or she is paid, or at a caregiving facility or program



What Makes a Person with Disabilities at Risk for Sexual Abuse?

While the disability does not cause abuse, it can and often does contribute to mistreatment. People with physical disabilities are at risk for sexual abuse through no fault of their own because they may be:

- Less able to defend themselves physically
- Less able to tell someone about the abuse
- Unable to tell the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact, whether it be abusive or sexual
- More dependent on others for care and, therefore, more trusting of the person they depend on
- Reluctant to report instances of abuse for fear of losing their caregiver
- May be considered less credible than a person without disabilities, when and if they report abuse

What Can We Do to Lessen the Risk of Sexual Abuse on People with Disabilities?

- Reliable, nationwide data on abused people with disabilities is needed. The differences of definitions, service criteria, and ways that states report abuse must be addressed.
- Education, welfare, medicine, and the protective service agencies need to set up an interactive network that assures the identification, assistance, and monitoring of people with disabilities.
- Training for all personnel (including law enforcement) who come in contact with people with disabilities and their families should emphasize knowledge about disabilities, reporting requirements, indicators of abuse, state laws concerning abuse, and hotline numbers to report abuse.
- Criminal background checks and screenings for all paid caregivers.

See the Person
Not the
Disability