

ORGANIZATIONAL RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION

of People with Disabilities*

There are many risk factors for victimization for people with disabilities (PWD); some of these factors are specific to distinct life areas, while others are more universal. These risk factors are all related to organizations and services.

LACK OF RESOURCES

Organizations that serve people with disabilities often experience a lack of resources--not only monetary or funding-based, but also a lack of resources related to prevention or intervention.

STAFF TURNOVER

Currently, the disability field is experiencing a staffing crisis; there's more need than supply, and wages are poverty-level and stagnant. This increases turnover, which leads to less oversight and more instability of care.

LACK OF EXPERIENCE

Due to the staffing crisis, many people who are providing care to people with disabilities lack caregiving experience, and may not have the support to recognize, prevent, or intervene in victimization of the people who use their services.

LACK OF CONFIDENCE

Staff often lacks confidence to give healthy relationship and healthy sexuality coaching to people who receive services. This may tie in to staff turnover, lack of organizational resources, or lack of staff experience.

NO PROCEDURAL CLARITY

Sometimes people will not respond properly to something if there's no process to follow. Organizations need to implement abuse reporting procedures and make sure staff understands them.

MISSING BACKGROUND CHECKS

A failure to perform background checks on *all* people in the organization can increase the risk of violence against PWD by providing opportunity for harm. This includes maintenance, volunteers, staff, and so on.

OVER-CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT

Many people with disabilities experience life within an authoritarian environment where they aren't granted the agency to make their own choices or decisions; this often extends to decisions about their bodies and sexualities.

SOCIETAL RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION

of People with Disabilities*

There are many risk factors for victimization for people with disabilities (PWD); some of these factors are specific to distinct life areas, while others are more universal. These risk factors are all related to society and societal attitudes towards PWD.

LACK OF EDUCATION

People with disabilities are often left out of sexual education, which leads to situations where they are uneducated about their body, the way that it works, what's private and what's public, sex, sexuality, sexual health, relationships, and more.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Societal attitudes towards PWD increase risk for abuse, particularly for PWD who are multiply marginalized—people of color, LGBTQ, immigrant populations, or people experiencing homelessness, for example.

OTHERS' LACK OF BELIEF

When PWD disclose sexual violence, many people perceive them as being less credible than a person without a disability, often citing that the person made it up or did not understand what was really happening.

FALSE IDEAS ON SEXUALITY

PWD are often seen as non-sexual beings who do not experience sexual desires, which is not true. People with disabilities experience the same spectrum of desire that people without disabilities do, from the same ages.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

PWD often experience social isolation due to a variety of factors, including overcontrolled environments, lack of access to transportation, lack of access to the internet, caregiver belief or comfort, lack of staffing, et cetera.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

People who cause harm are often not caught or not held accountable for sexual violence. Though this is a pervasive societal issue, due to the combined social factors it has an outsize impact on PWD.

ASSISTANCE BARRIERS

People with disabilities often experience cultural and societal barriers that impede their abilities to find and access assistance. This may include assistance that is not in ASL for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; lack of support from caregivers or staff to acquire assistance; overreliance on verbal communication or evidence; or agencies and organizations that are not equipped to assist people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION

of People with Disabilities*

There are many risk factors for victimization for people with disabilities (PWD); some of these factors are specific to distinct life areas, while others are more universal. These risk factors are all related to community--or lack thereof.

EXPERIENCING POVERTY

Many PWD experience poverty, earning less than \$15,000 per year. Although currently the poverty line for a single person under 65 is an annual income of \$11,770, healthcare costs and costs of living with disabilities further limit spending power. Additionally, the American Journal of Public Health estimates that 530,000 American families go bankrupt every year from medical debt.

NO INTERNET ACCESS

Lack of internet access is a large barrier for many PWD, for many reasons including experiencing poverty or homelessness, lack of available providers (particularly in rural communities), or lack of support for being online or accessing the internet. Lack of web access may also mean lack of access to community, assistance, opportunity, employment, and info.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITY

The rate of employment for PWD from the Bureau of Labor Statistics was 19.1% in 2019; the rate for people without disabilities was 65.9%. This gap reflects both the low employment rates for PWD as well as the lack of opportunities available. Currently, it is legal to pay PWD subminimum wage for working in certain locations, often referred to as 'sheltered workshops.'

NO PUBLIC TRANSIT

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), 45% of the population of the US lives in an area where there is no access to public transportation. The percent increases for PWD due to weather conditions and inaccessibility of currently available options. Buses with broken lifts, broken elevators in subway stations, or info only given through audio are all examples.

LACK OF (ACCESSIBLE) TRANSPORTATION

When public transportation isn't an option, private transportation becomes a necessity. Accessible vehicles are often prohibitively expensive, and many people with disabilities are not taught how to drive due to societal attitudes. Ride sharing services like Lyft and Uber are frequently inaccessible and riders who use mobility devices have reported having rides canceled or encountering hostile drivers.

Service dog users have experienced similar problems.

Personal vehicle maintenance can also be expensive; the APTA estimates that the average household spends 16 cents out of every \$1 on transportation (16% of their income)--the largest expense after housing. On an annual income of \$15,000, that's \$2,400 per year.

This risk factor info-graphic is brought to you by the Indiana Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force (APDTF) who completed a literature review in 2019. You can reach us via email at INdisabilityjustice@gmail.com with your questions or concerns.

Citations:

- Alriksson-Schmidt, A. I., Armour, B. S., & Thibadeau, J. K. (2010). Are Adolescent Girls With a Physical Disability at Increased Risk for Sexual Violence? *Journal of School Health*, 80, 361–367. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2010.00514
- Balderian, N. (1991). Sexual abuse of people with developmental disabilities. *Sexuality and Disability*, 9(4), 323-335.
- Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., & Smith, S. G. (2016). Disability and Risk of Recent Sexual Violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(5), 928–933. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.303004
- Cowley, Kelsey, Fellow, Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center. (2018). Starting the Conversation: A Toolkit for Self-Advocates to Talk About Sexual Violence in Their Community. Toolkit available online February 13, 2020 at: <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/resource/starting-the-conversation-a-toolkit-for-self-advocates-to-talk-about-sexual-violence-in-their-community/>
- Davis, Leigh Ann, M.S.S.S.W., M.P.A., L.A.D. (2019). Resources, People with Intellectual Disability and Sexual Violence. The Arc. Retrieved online at May 20, 2019: <https://www.thearc.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=2457>
- Euser, S. , Alink, L. R., Tharner, A. , Ijzendoorn, M. H. and Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2016). The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse in Out-of-home Care: Increased Risk for Children with a Mild Intellectual Disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 29: 83-92. doi:10.1111/jar.12160
- Fredriksen-Goldsen, Karen I., Hyun-Jun Kim, and Susan E. Barkan (2012). Disability Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults: Disparities in Prevalence and Risk. *American Journal of Public Health* 102, e16_e21. doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300379
- Hughes K, Bellis MA, Jones L, Wood S, Bates G, Eckley L, McCoy E, Mikton C, Shakespeare T, Officer A. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against adults with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Lancet*; doi:10.1016/S0410-6736(11)61851-5.
- Keilty, J & Connelly, G. (2001). Making a statement: An exploratory study of barriers facing women with an intellectual disability when making a statement about sexual assault to police. *Disability & Society*, 16 (2), 273-291.
- Krahn, Gloria L. PhD, MPH, Deborah Klein Walker, EdD, and Rosaly Correa-De-Araujo, MD, PhD (2015). Persons with Disabilities as an Unrecognized Health Disparity Population. *American Journal of Public Health*, Supplement 2, 2015, Vol. 105, No. S2., p. S198. Retrieved November 1, 2018 from: <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302182>
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention (2020). Risk and Protective Factors. Accessed online May 20, 2019 at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- Normand, C.L. and Sallafranque-St-Louis, F. (2016), Cybervictimization of Young People With an Intellectual or Developmental Disability: Risks Specific to Sexual Solicitation. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 29:99-110. doi:10.1111/jar.12163
- Plummer, S.-B., & Findley, P. (2012). Women With Disabilities' Experience With Physical and Sexual Abuse: Review of the Literature and Implications for the Field. *Trauma Violence Abuse* 2012 13: 15. Accessed online May 21, 2019 at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patricia_Findley/publication/51787909_Women_With_Disabilities'_Experience_With_Physical_and_Sexual_Abuse/links/0deec5304c5a1c79d8000000.pdf
- Taggart, L. & R. McMillan (2009). Listening to women with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems: a focus on risk and resilient factors. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 2009, vol 13(4) 321–340. doi: 10.1177/1744629509353239
- West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services (2019). West Virginia S.A.F.E. Training and Collaboration Toolkit, Serving Sexual Violence Victims with Disabilities, B1.1 Sexual Violence 101. Sexual Victimization of Persons with Disabilities: Prevalence and Risk Factors Sexual Victimization of Persons with Disabilities: Prevalence and Risk Factors. West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services. Accessed online May 20, 2019 at: https://www.arcnj.org/file_download/eeead953-679c-4937-9f6e-596248f9261e

Funding for this publication was made possible (in part) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Indiana State Department of Health. The views expressed in written materials or publications do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

The Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force Literature Review of Risk Factors for Sexual Violence Victimization for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD)

The Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force completed a literature review in 2018-2019 to identify risk factors associated with sexual violence and people with ID/DD. Sexual violence (SV) primary prevention requires increasing protective factors and reducing/eliminating sexual violence perpetration risk factors; and though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have [identified risk and protective factors for sexual violence perpetration](#), the research may not include people with ID/DD. People with ID/DD communicate using a variety of methods and some people do not use written or spoken English. The result is hundreds of thousands of people are left out of scientifically designed SV data collection practices, such as [NISVS](#) and [YRBSS](#). The task force literature review included science-based evidence (journal articles), practice-based evidence (toolkits), and practice wisdom (community resources) created after the year 2000.

These free and readily available resources reviewed (see citations below) generally **associated risk factors with victimization** and with **disability as an identity that increases one's risk for sexual violence victimization**. There were no clear findings to report beyond the CDC about risk and protective factors for perpetration. Rather than not share the task force findings from the literature review, the task force organized the sexual violence risks for victimization across the [social ecological model](#) according to the level of their impact on people with disabilities, including ID/DD. Learn about the Task Force's work in disability justice and sexual violence primary prevention in our [online resource community](#) in Patreon or email us at INdisabilityjustice@gmail.com.

One-Pager Citations:

- Ariksson-Schmidt, A. I., Armour, B. S., & Thibadeau, J. K. (2010). Are Adolescent Girls With a Physical Disability at Increased Risk for Sexual Violence? *Journal of School Health*, 80, 361–367. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2010.00514
- Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., & Smith, S. G. (2016). Disability and Risk of Recent Sexual Violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(5), 928–933. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.303004
- Cowley, Kelsey, Fellow, Self-Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center. (2018). Starting the Conversation: A Toolkit for Self-Advocates to Talk About Sexual Violence in Their Community. Toolkit available online February 13, 2020 at: <https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/resource/starting-the-conversation-a-toolkit-for-self-advocates-to-talk-about-sexual-violence-in-their-community/>
- Davis, Leigh Ann, M.S.S.S.W., M.P.A., L.A.D. (2019). Resources, People with Intellectual Disability and Sexual Violence. The Arc. Retrieved online at May 20, 2019: <https://www.thearc.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=2457>
- Euser, S. , Alink, L. R., Tharner, A. , IJzendoorn, M. H. and Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2016). The Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse in Out-of-home Care: Increased Risk for Children with a Mild Intellectual Disability. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 29: 83-92. doi:10.1111/jar.12160
- Fredriksen-Goldsen, Karen I., Hyun-Jun Kim, and Susan E. Barkan (2012). Disability Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults: Disparities in Prevalence and Risk. *American Journal of Public Health* 102, e16_e21. doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300379
- Hughes K, Bellis MA, Jones L, Wood S, Bates G, Eckley L, McCoy E, Mikton C, Shakespeare T, Officer A. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against adults with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Lancet*; doi:10.1016/S0410-6736(11)61851-5.
- Keilty, J & Connelly, G. (2001). Making a statement: An exploratory study of barriers facing women with an intellectual disability when making a statement about sexual assault to police. *Disability & Society*, 16 (2), 273-291.

- Krahn, Gloria L. PhD, MPH, Deborah Klein Walker, EdD, and Rosaly Correa-De-Araujo, MD, PhD (2015). Persons with Disabilities as an Unrecognized Health Disparity Population. *American Journal of Public Health*, Supplement 2, 2015, Vol. 105, No. S2., p. S198. Retrieved November 1, 2018 from: <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302182>
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention (2020). Risk and Protective Factors. Accessed online May 20, 2019 at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- Normand, C.L. and Sallafranque-St-Louis, F. (2016), Cybervictimization of Young People With an Intellectual or Developmental Disability: Risks Specific to Sexual Solicitation. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 29:99-110. doi:10.1111/jar.12163
- Plummer, S.-B., & Findley, P. (2012). Women With Disabilities' Experience With Physical and Sexual Abuse: Review of the Literature and Implications for the Field. *Trauma Violence Abuse* 2012 13: 15. Accessed online May 21, 2019 at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Patricia_Findley/publication/51787909_Women_With_Disabilities'_Experience_With_Physical_and_Sexual_Abuse/links/0deec5304c5a1c79d8000000.pdf
- Taggart, L. & R. McMillan (2009). Listening to women with intellectual disabilities and mental health problems: a focus on risk and resilient factors. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 2009, vol 13(4) 321–340. doi: 10.1177/1744629509353239
- West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services (2019). West Virginia S.A.F.E. Training and Collaboration Toolkit, Serving Sexual Violence Victims with Disabilities, B1.1 Sexual Violence 101. Sexual Victimization of Persons with Disabilities: Prevalence and Risk Factors Sexual Victimization of Persons with Disabilities: Prevalence and Risk Factors. West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services. Accessed online May 20, 2019 at: https://www.arcnj.org/file_download/eeeead953-679c-4937-9f6e-596248f9261e

Funding for this publication was made possible (in part) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Indiana State Department of Health. The views expressed in written materials or publications do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.