

Gap Analysis of Services/Care for Sexual Abuse Victims with Disabilities, Including People with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (ID/DD) in Indiana

The Indiana Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force conducted interviews with disability serving and governmental agencies in order to understand the processes by which people with disabilities can report abuse including sexual assault (SA). There are three state divisions, Bureau of Developmental and Disability Services (BDDS), Division of Aging, and the Department of Child Services (DCS) that have processes in place for reporting, following up after incidents, and to provide for or “[cover](#)” medical and [legal care](#). After the Task Force identified mandatory state reporting procedures, they created [flow charts](#) depicting these practices to encourage transparency across sectors. During this collaborative effort, these three common gaps in holistic care emerged following the official reporting of the incident:

Education

Provider staff/families not educated in sexual assault care including advocacy

Provider staff are not educated on process after reporting the incident

Individual with ID/DD may not want to or know how to communicate details of the incident

Mandated Process

Legal process/terminology is confusing for person with ID/DD

Legal requirement for reporting abuse when victim might not want to

Legal Process is not trauma informed

Advocacy

No crisis or ongoing advocacy for person harmed

Trained SA advocates are not comprehensively educated on ID/DD concerns and communication needs

How do we make advocacy an automatic action step post-incident?



Legal Justice



Restorative Justice

ID/DD World



Sexual Assault Crisis & Prevention World

Created collaboratively by the
Indiana Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force

In reviewing the [flow charts](#), the APDTF learned disability service providers follow the reporting requirements set by state agencies and offer support where they can with little to no interagency collaboration. Each state division, BDDS, Division of Aging & DCS, collects incident data and enforces mandated safety standards and when sexual abuse incidents are substantiated, a [criminal justice](#) process *may* begin. The safety of the person receiving services is paramount as is protecting provider organizations from liability for harm that may come to the person while receiving services. Advocacy or support for a person with ID/DD through the [criminal justice](#) and/or healing process is not guaranteed. Additionally, organizations that provide rape crisis services do not typically house people with ID/DD, especially when there are caregivers in the person's life. The Task Force makes the following recommendations to increase safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments in the state of Indiana:

- **Education** of disability service providers, victim service providers, and the community is needed to ensure survivors with disabilities are connected to the healing services they need following an incident of violence. Education on bodily autonomy, sexual literacy, and inappropriate touch is needed for people with disabilities so they can communicate their desires and report positive or harmful experiences.
- **Mandated processes** ensure reports are made to the appropriate authorities to ensure safety of the survivor as well as other consumers. However, these processes can feel sterile, and confusing and sometimes made against the will of the victim or person harmed.
- **Advocates** remind survivors of their rights, empower survivors to choose what is right for them, and provide emotional support to survivors in challenging situations. For survivors with disabilities to benefit from advocacy, disability organizations must be informed of this role and contact them when needed, and victim service providers must be educated on the unique needs and ways to communicate with survivors with disabilities.

The gaps discussed in this document demonstrate a lack of communication and understanding between the disability justice movement and the anti-violence movement, which we believe is the outcome of the siloing of social problems and constructing one size fits all solutions through state systems. While [legal justice](#) is attempted and pursued, prosecution and conviction rates remain low, and restorative and healing practices are ignored when they involve people with ID/DD. Instead, [restorative justice](#) is personal and responsive to the needs of the individual survivor or person harmed; it is both survivor-centered and person-first, empowering the individual who was harmed to drive the investigative and reparative processes.

The APDTF is connecting people with and without disabilities across disciplines to identify and address the existing gaps in service provision, education, and communication across sectors and levels of prevention. We are joining the concepts of survivor-centered services from the anti-violence movement with person-first services from the disability justice movement so that survivors with disabilities are empowered to lead self-directed lives, which includes what happens following an incident of violence. 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.

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