

Indiana Disability Justice (formerly The Abuse Prevention Disability Task Force) completed a literature review in 2018-2019 to identify risk factors associated with sexual violence and people with cognitive and developmental disabilities. 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 cognitive and developmental disabilities. People with cognitive and developmental disabilities communicate using a variety of methods and some people do not use written or spoken “standardized” language. 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 increasing one’s risk for sexual violence victimization** (as a result of structural inequities that place people with disabilities at greater risk). There were no clear findings to report beyond the CDC about risk and protective factors for perpetration. 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 cognitive and developmental disabilities. We are developing recommendations to pass along to those who are interested, so keep checking back.

This risk factor infographic is brought to you by the Indiana Disability Justice who completed a literature review in 2019. You can reach us via email at INdisabilityjustice@gmail.com with your questions or concerns.

COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION of People with Disabilities*

There are many risk factors for victimization for people with disabilities; 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 people with disabilities 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 people with disabilities, 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 people with disabilities 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 Disabled people as well as the lack of opportunities available. Currently, it is legal to pay people with disabilities 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 percentage increases for people with disabilities 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 each \$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.

ORGANIZATIONAL RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION of People with Disabilities*

There are many risk factors for victimization for people with disabilities (people with disabilities); 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 relationships and healthy sexuality coaching to people who receive services. This may tie into staff turnover, lack of organizational resources, or lack of staff experience.

MISSING BACKGROUND CHECKS

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

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 understand them.

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.

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