

ABUSE OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

DID YOU KNOW THAT . . .

- ▶ Women with disabilities have a **40%** greater chance of intimate partner violence than women without disabilities?

Women with disabilities may experience unique forms of abuse that are difficult to recognize—making it even harder to get the kind of help they need. Such abuse may include:

- ▶ Removing or destroying a person's mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters, walkers)
- ▶ Denying access to and/or taking prescribed medication from someone
- ▶ Forcing someone to take medication against her will
- ▶ Forcing someone to lie in soiled undergarments
- ▶ Preventing access to food
- ▶ Inappropriately touching a person while assisting with bathing and/or dressing
- ▶ Denying access to disability-related resources in the community and/or to health care appointments

Sources for the facts and information in this brochure can be found online at <http://www.apa.org/topics/violence/women-disabilities.aspx>.

RESOURCES

ADWAS: ABUSED DEAF WOMEN'S ADVOCACY SERVICES—provides comprehensive services to deaf and deaf-blind victims/survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking:
www.adwas.org

APA'S PSYCHOLOGIST LOCATOR—makes it easy for you to find practicing psychologists in your local area: <http://locator.apa.org>

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE—works to educate the public on how to recognize domestic violence and what to do about it; teen dating violence; the impact of family violence on children; and domestic violence against individuals with disabilities, older adults, and other marginalized populations:
www.ncadv.org

VAWnet: THE NATIONAL ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—provides a comprehensive and easily accessible collection of full-text, searchable electronic materials and resources on domestic violence, sexual violence, and related issues:
www.vawnet.org

WOMEN OF COLOR NETWORK (WOCN)—promotes and supports the leadership of women of color advocates: <http://womenofcolornetwork.org>



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION
PUBLIC INTEREST DIRECTORATE

Women's Programs Office
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
202-336-6044
www.apa.org/pi/women



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

www.thehotline.org/get-help

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) TTY 1-800-787-3224

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

If you are being abused right now, CALL 911

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Computer use can be monitored and is impossible to completely clear. If you are afraid your Internet and/or computer use might be monitored, use a safer computer and/or use a telephone/cell phone that allows you to erase your call log.



SAFETY ALERT!

TYPES OF ABUSE

Abuse is not always easy to identify, but it can help to learn about the different kinds of abuse:

- ▶ **Physical abuse** (e.g., hitting, slapping, and/or restraining)
- ▶ **Sexual abuse** (e.g., forcing someone to engage in sexual acts)
- ▶ **Verbal abuse** (e.g., name calling, cursing)
- ▶ **Emotional abuse** (e.g., isolating someone from friends and family, humiliating or ignoring a person)
- ▶ **Financial exploitation** (e.g., taking and/or controlling a person's money)

WHERE DOES ABUSE OCCUR AND BY WHOM?

Abuse can occur anywhere—but more often when a woman has limited access to help or witnesses.

Abusers can be:

- ▶ Caregivers
- ▶ Family members
- ▶ Transportation providers
- ▶ Intimate partners
- ▶ Personal care attendants and other disability support providers

GETTING HELP

Getting help and reporting the abuser is not easy. Women with disabilities often do not report their abuser because:

- ▶ Signs of abuse may not be apparent to others
- ▶ They may feel embarrassed, guilty, or ashamed
- ▶ They may fear losing their home or independence, especially if the abuser is the caregiver and/or intimate partner
- ▶ They may not know where to get help—or help may not be easy to get
- ▶ Communication barriers may stand in the way, especially for deaf women
- ▶ Service providers often have limited knowledge about disability needs and abuse
- ▶ The abuser may be well known and respected

ALSO CONSIDER CONTACTING AND/OR TELLING:

- ▶ Adult Protective Services
- ▶ Your doctor
- ▶ Your psychologist or counselor
- ▶ Your local disability resource center

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you know someone who is being abused or if you are being abused, it is important to know there is HELP. **But you may need to be open to a team approach to help you connect with local agencies addressing both disability and abuse.**

ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN HELP

Consider the following national organizations that may be able to refer you to local resources:

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

1333 Moursund Avenue, Suite A221
Houston, TX 77030

Phone: **713-799-5086**

Toll Free: **800-44-CROWD (27693)**

<https://www.bcm.edu/research/centers/research-on-women-with-disabilities>

DEAF WOMEN UNITED

<http://dwu.org>

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS

<http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html>

NAMI: NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

1-800-950-6264

Vera Institute of Justice

www.vera.org

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF

- ▶ Connect with supportive and caring people, not those who might blame you for the abuse.
- ▶ Secure a restraining or protective order if necessary—it prohibits an individual from harassing, threatening, approaching, accosting, or even contacting you. Always keep it with you.
- ▶ Seek help from a psychologist or other licensed mental health provider; contact your doctor or other primary health care provider; engage the services at centers or shelters for battered women.

SAFETY PLANNING

- ▶ If possible, have a phone handy at all times and know what numbers to call for help.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to call the police.
- ▶ Pack a bag (include money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, extra clothes and medicines) and leave it in a safe place or with someone you trust. Don't forget to consider critical disability-related devices and/or aids.



- ▶ Let trusted friends and neighbors know of your situation, and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help.



- ▶ Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word or sign to signal to them that they should get help or leave the house.



- ▶ Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.