Abuse Prevention and Healthy Relationships for Adults with Disabilities

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VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities
WELCOME!
THANK YOU!

Thank you
Goals for Today

• **Quick**: Types of Abuse
• **Quick**: The scope of the problem
• **Quick**: Some reasons why children and adults with disabilities experience such high rates of abuse
• Dynamics of abuse
• Preventing Abuse
• Responding to Abuse
Everyone’s Perspective is different...
What to do if you suspect someone is being abused/neglected:

Contact your Local Department of Social Services

OR...

Virginia Family Violence And Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-838-8238
What is abuse?

• Physical abuse
• Emotional abuse
  – bullying, exclusion, institutionalization
• Controlling access to family, friends, escape
• Engaging in sexual acts without consent
• Financial abuse
• Neglect
Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017)

- A higher percentage of violence against people with disabilities was committed by persons the victim knew well or who were casual acquaintances than for victims without disabilities.

- People with cognitive disabilities had highest victimization rate among the disability types measured for total violent crime.
Abuse of People with Disabilities...

- Withholding or disabling assistive devices
- Hiding medications
- Neglecting personal care
- Refusing to transfer
- Keeping the person from using accessible transportation
- Disabling communication devices
The SCOPE of the PROBLEM
For people with disabilities, abuse occurs:

- Children with disabilities are **at least three times more likely** to be abused or neglected than their peers without disabilities (Jones et al., 2012), and they are more likely to be **seriously injured or harmed** by maltreatment (Sedlak et al., 2010).

- **Four times as likely** to be victims of crime (Van Cleve & Davis, 2006)

- Children with **behavioral health conditions** who were maltreated before age 3 were **10 times more likely** to be maltreated again (Jaudes & Mackey-Bilaver, 2008)
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(Harrell, 2017; Stevens, 2012)
Abuse of People with Disabilities

• Typically, the person’s specific disability is used as part of the abuse
• Care provider takes advantage of person’s disability to withhold necessities like personal care, food, medication, communication
  – Physical disabilities
  – Intellectual disabilities
  – Behavioral control
Are people with disabilities abused at such epidemic rates?
Skewed Boundaries
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Trained compliance
(Tharinger, Horton, & Millea, 1990)

“When you have a disability, people are always telling you, ‘Do as this person says! Do as this person says’ and all this other stuff.”

Thomas Mangrum – Washington, DC
This diagram is based on the Power and Control wheel developed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project, Duluth, MN, and the Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities by a Caregiver wheel developed by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Madison, WI.
Power and Control Issues

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Abusers *are* able to control their behavior, they do it all the time!

- Abusers pick and choose who they abuse
- Abusers carefully choose where and when to abuse
- Abusers are able to stop their behaviors when it benefits them
- Violent abusers usually target their blows in a place where they won’t show

*Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. Last updated: April 2012*
Signs of External Authority

• Access to paper, pens, computer
• Jewelry, stylish appearance
• Body language
• Initiating greeting/touch

(B.Franz, 2014)
Cultural Myths and Attitudes
Use the CHAT feature to respond

Supporting People with disabilities
Abuse prevention strategies
Professionals use TWO languages
CAN'T I JUST SHAKE WITHOUT YOU MOVING IN FOR A MAN HUG?
ASK THE HUNK BEFORE YOU TOUCH THE JUNK

ASK THE CUTIE BEFORE YOU TOUCH THE BOOTY
Rules for Healthy Touch

- YOU decide who touches you
- YOU can change your mind
- Intimate touch of private body areas are okay as long as both people agree and it takes place in a private place
The Bathing Suit Rule

Penis
Buttocks (behind)
Breasts
Vagina
Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention: LEAP

• Feelings
• Trust
• Talk
• Touch
LEAP: Map of People in Your World

- Paid Support
- Some Family/Friends
- Friends
- Acquaintance
- Strangers

Feeling:
- Heart

Trust:
- Handshake

Tell:
- People
Poll Question

Paid Supporters

• Help you problem solve: Listen
• Celebrate your successes
• Provide you with necessary assistance
• Advocate with you for a better quality of life

• **Receive Payment**

Friends

• Help you problem solve: Listen
• Celebrate your successes
• Provide you with necessary assistance
• Advocate with you for a better quality of life

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9/20/21
“Do you love me?
Are you still my friend?”

• “I am not your friend but I love working with you”
• ”You don’t know me well enough yet to hug me.”
• “I’m not your boyfriend/girlfriend, but let’s talk about how you can find one.”
• “I have so much fun with you I can’t believe I’m getting paid to do this!”
• “I love everyone in the world and you are part of that world.”
Types of Relationships

- Healthy Relationship
- Confusing Relationship
- Unhealthy Relationship
How do you feel when you are around someone?
Biggest Issue: TRUST!

in all this chaos, we found safety.
What strategies were you taught to stay safe?
Don’t use FEAR and PUNISHMENT to prevent abuse

DO SAY....

• Is there anything that made you uncomfortable?
• What would you like to change for next time?
• Some secrets were not meant to be secrets
• It’s my job to keep you safe and happy and if you ever feel unsafe, please let me know
• Discuss a safety plan

DON’T SAY...

• Don’t let anyone touch you
• Don’t get in a car with anyone
• Remember that ”the bathing suit rule” doesn’t apply to everything....
Disclosing Abuse
Disclosing Abuse
Validate without minimizing

• “You seem really upset about that.”
• “Tell me about why you are sad/mad/upset/angry?”
• “It doesn’t seem fair: what else could you do?”
• “It’s okay to be sad/mad/upset/angry”
  – Shenandoah Chefalo, Garbage Bag Suitcase
Too many questions!
Responding: It’s time to call an expert!
We’re not done yet, but take the poll!
RESPONDING

• Mandated Reporters
• Adult Protective Services
• Forensic Interviewing
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High Five! Any questions?
To contact us:

- ncrada@vcu.edu
- mdwray@vcu.edu
- Quiz: [https://forms.gle/C6vqymnGbtDfC4vM6](https://forms.gle/C6vqymnGbtDfC4vM6)