

Addressing Violence Against Women with Developmental Disabilities

Funding provided by:

NJ Office of Victim Witness Advocacy

Welcome and Overview

Who are we?

What are we going to discuss today?

Why is this important?

Objectives

- ▶ Communicate Effectively with Women with Developmental Disabilities
- ▶ Identify Types of Abuse
- ▶ Identify Signs of Abuse
- ▶ Discuss Legal and Reporting Issues

Background and Significance

- ▶ Approximately 54 million Americans live with physical, developmental and/or psychological disabilities
- ▶ People with disabilities are the single largest minority group in the U.S.
- ▶ Approximately 1 in 6 of children in the US between the ages of 3 - 17 have a developmental disability (15% total population)
- ▶ Nearly 25,000 adults are eligible to receive DDD services statewide

What is a Developmental Disability

A condition that:

- ▶ Is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental or physical impairments;
- ▶ Is manifest before age 22;
- ▶ Is likely to continue indefinitely;
- ▶ Results in substantial function limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity, that is, self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction and capacity for independent living; and
- ▶ Reflects the need for a combination and sequence of special interdisciplinary or generic care, treatment or other services which are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.

Types of Developmental Disabilities

- ▶ Autism Spectrum Disorders
- ▶ Hearing Loss
- ▶ Vision Loss
- ▶ Muscular Dystrophy
- ▶ Cerebral Palsy
- ▶ Spina Bifida
- ▶ Fragile X Syndrome
- ▶ Tourette's Syndrome
- ▶ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

What would you do?

- ▶ A survivor with a developmental disability comes to your shelter/office/program/ crisis center
- ▶ One person acts as the provider the other as the survivor
- ▶ As the survivor, what are you going to share with the provider and how are you going to do it?
- ▶ As the provider, how are you going to get the information you need to best help your new client and how are you going to do it?
- ▶ Debrief

Tips for Interacting with Women with Disabilities

- ▶ Relax. Be yourself
- ▶ Assume competence until you know otherwise
- ▶ Offer assistance if you feel like it, but wait until your offer is accepted BEFORE you help
- ▶ Allow extra time for her to communicate
- ▶ Ask for clarification should you not understand something she is saying-make no assumptions
- ▶ Speak directly to her, rather than her companion
- ▶ Be aware of non-verbal communication methods
- ▶ Remember treatment systems may be a source of trauma or trigger points

Let's talk about rights

Rights of the Developmentally Disabled

- ▶ Privacy and respect;
- ▶ Keep and use their own clothes, money and personal possessions, and to have a place to put them so that no one else may use them;
- ▶ Associate with members of the opposite sex;
- ▶ Send and receive mail without it being opened or read by other people and to receive assistance, should they want it, reading or writing the letters;
- ▶ Make or receive private phone calls during set times;

Rights of the Developmentally Disabled

- ▶ Have a healthy diet;
- ▶ Have visitors of their choice during established times;
- ▶ Request release from a program or transfer to another program;
- ▶ Receive guardianship services, if they are an adult who needs them;
- ▶ Be informed of the condition of their health and to be able to contact their doctor;
- ▶ Be free from unnecessary medical tests or treatment;
- ▶ Be free from unnecessary restraints or from being isolated, unless in an emergency;
- ▶ Be free from physical punishment

Rights and Legal Aspects

- ▶ Your agency/organization or license may require you to report abuse.
- ▶ **ASK PERMISSION** to report abuse or neglect of a woman with a disability.
- ▶ Call the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Special Response Unit to report abuse of a woman living in a state-run facility.

Rights and Legal Aspects

- ▶ Offer to make a report with the individual present.
- ▶ Offer support to individual to self-report.
- ▶ Inform her that she has the right to decline APS services.
- ▶ Abuse or neglect of a child under 18, **MUST** be reported to Children Protective Services.

Guardianship

Among Women with Developmental Disabilities

- ▶ Women with disabilities experience violence and abuse at least twice as often as their non-disabled peers.
- ▶ Women with developmental disabilities are 4-10 times as likely to be sexually assaulted than their non-disabled peers
- ▶ Study findings overwhelmingly point to the fact that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse and experience abuse for longer periods of time than their non-disabled peers
- ▶ Women with disabilities are often abused by caregivers responsible for providing intimate and life-supporting personal care

DD and Sexual Assault

- ▶ Among adults who are developmentally disabled, as many as 83% of females and 32% of males are victims of sexual assault
- ▶ 40% of women with physical disabilities reported being sexually assaulted
- ▶ 49% of people with developmental disabilities, who are victims of sexual violence, will experience 10 or more abusive incidents
- ▶ Only 3% of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental disabilities are ever reported
- ▶ Of the women with disabilities who have been married, 38% experienced sexual violence by their partner. 33% of abusers are friends or acquaintances
 - ▶ 33% are natural or foster family members
 - ▶ 25% are caregivers or service providers

Vulnerability to Abuse

- ▶ Increased dependency on others for long term care.
- ▶ Denial of human rights that results in the perception of powerlessness.
- ▶ Less risk of discovery as perceived by the perpetrator.
- ▶ The difficulty some survivors have in being believed.

Vulnerability to Abuse

- ▶ Less education about appropriate and inappropriate sexuality.
- ▶ Social isolation and increased risk of manipulation
- ▶ Physical helplessness and vulnerability in public places due to lack of public accommodations/ accessibility
- ▶ Values and attitudes within the field of disability toward mainstreaming and integration without consideration for each individual's capacity for self-protection/direction

Self-Reporting

- ▶ For those who do report abuse, nearly 54% say that nothing happened after doing so
- ▶ In fewer than 10% of reported cases was the perpetrator arrested
- ▶ Reasons for not reporting
 - ▶ Doing so is futile
 - ▶ Felt threatened or afraid to do so
 - ▶ Didn't know how to do so, or even that they could

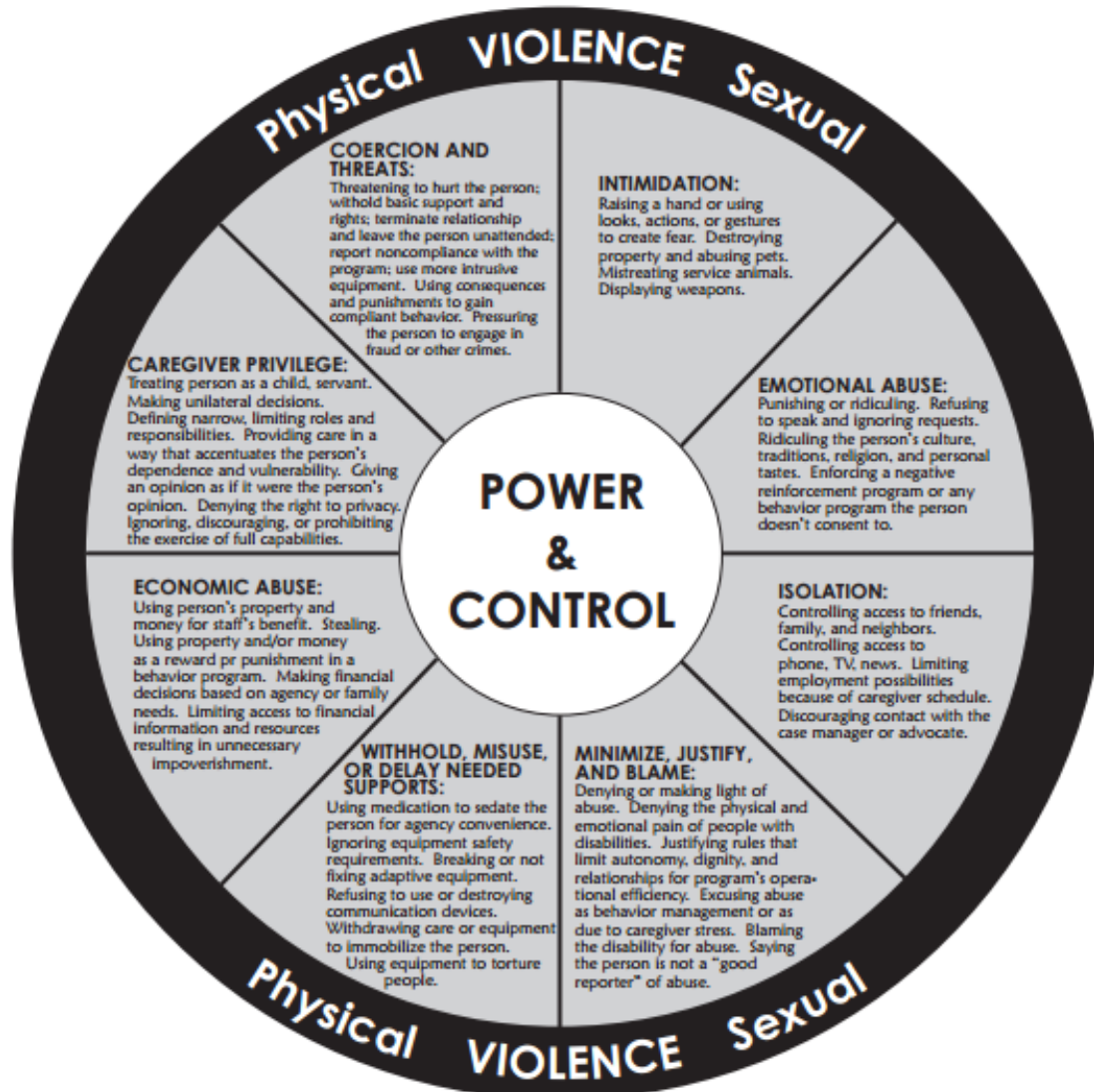
Types of Abuse

- ▶ Verbal (name-calling, threatening)
- ▶ Neglect (refusing healthcare and medicines, food and water, bathing and use of toilet)
- ▶ Removing/destroying assistive devices
- ▶ Isolating her and preventing access to community, family, and friends
- ▶ Physical (hitting, beating, biting)
- ▶ Emotional (criticizing, blaming, shouting)
- ▶ Sexual (rape, exploitation)
- ▶ Financial (stealing/controlling money or assets, controlling resources)

Signs of Abuse

- ▶ Bruises, burns, abrasions from rope or other restraints
- ▶ Broken bones, dislocations, sprains
- ▶ Internal injuries
- ▶ Bed sores, dehydration, malnourishment
- ▶ Lack of adaptive devices
- ▶ Inadequate sanitation or cleanliness
- ▶ Mood swings, regressive behaviors, flashbacks, lack of trust, isolation, behavioral cues
- ▶ Sleeping difficulties, eating disorders, substance abuse

Power and Control Wheel



Power and Control

- ▶ Coercion and Threats
- ▶ Intimidation
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Minimize, Justify, Blame
- ▶ Economic Abuse
- ▶ Emotional Abuse
- ▶ Withhold, Misuse or Delay Needed Supports
- ▶ Caregiver Privilege

Assessing Abuse- Screening Tool

Within the last year...

- ▶ Have you been hit, slapped, kicked, pushed, shoved or otherwise physically hurt by someone?
- ▶ Has anyone forced you to participate in sexual activities?
- ▶ Have you been threatened, intimidated, coerced, or manipulated to do things that made you fearful and/or do things that you did not wish to do?
- ▶ Have you been humiliated or shamed, called names, overly criticized or otherwise belittled?

Assessing Abuse-Screening Tool

Within the last year...

- ▶ Has anyone prevented you from using a wheelchair, cane, respirator, or other assistive devices?
- ▶ Has anyone you depend on refused to help you with an important personal need, such as taking your medicine, getting to the bathroom, getting out of bed, bathing, getting dressed, or getting food or drink?

Suspect Abuse?

- ▶ Talk to her alone and in a private area
- ▶ Interact directly with her as much as possible
- ▶ Ask direct and indirect questions
- ▶ Assess for behavioral cues (lack of eye contact, appearance of fear, depression)
- ▶ Ask if she has assistive equipment/technology that is not present
- ▶ Ask if she needs any accommodations to communicate

Safety Planning-Disability Related Considerations

- ▶ Ability to physically leave
- ▶ Access to:
 - ▶ Personal care
 - ▶ Durable medical equipment
 - ▶ Augmentative communication devices
 - ▶ Personal Documents
 - ▶ Cash
 - ▶ Transportation
 - ▶ Medication

How accessible are your services?

- ▶ What is the composition of people with disabilities in your community?
- ▶ How often does violence against women with disabilities occur?
- ▶ What services are available for people with disabilities,
- ▶ How accessible are existing services for people with disabilities?
- ▶ How responsive are existing services to the unique safety and other needs of victims of violence?
- ▶ What capacity-building resources are available to organizations providing existing services for survivors with disabilities?
- ▶ What are the potential strategies to address identified gaps in services or unmet needs?

Source: www.vera.org/project/accessing-safety-initiative

Scenario

Betty has been married to Frank for 10 years. Both have intellectual disabilities; Betty also has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Together, they have a 6 year old daughter Anne, and are expecting a baby soon. Frank lost his job, started using drugs and began verbally and physically abusing Betty and Anne. Betty feels she must leave Frank before the baby is born. Frank works odd jobs- so he is home a lot. They live on a fixed income and Betty takes care of their finances. Betty has no family and Frank has scared off the friends she once had. However, Betty and Anne are allowed to attend church on Sunday and Betty knows her pastor.

Scenario

Maria's family immigrated to Camden just before she was born. Maria, who is 19 years old, has Spina Bifida and uses a power wheelchair. Spanish is spoken at home, but Maria also speaks English. Maria is home-schooled and has earned a scholarship to a local college. Her family is very protective of her and will only allow her to go to college if she lives at home. Maria has been sexually abused by her female cousin, who acts as her personal assistant, and also by her grandfather since she was small. Maria hasn't told her family because she doesn't think they will believe her. She has recently confided in her tutor, who has agreed to help her leave.

DDS

NJ Resources 2016

http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dds/documents/RD_16%20PQ_Final0316.pdf

Resources

NJ Office of Victim Witness Advocacy

njvw.org

NJ Division of Disability Services

nj.gov/humanservices/dds

NJ Division of Dev. Disabilities

nj.gov/humanservices/ddd

NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault

njcasa.org

NJ Coalition to End Domestic Violence

njcedv.org

Accessing Safety Initiative

vera.org/project/accessing-safety-initiative

SafePlace

safeplace.org

Northeast ADA Center

northeastada.org



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