

HOW TO GET HELP WHEN YOU ARE BEING HURT: A GUIDE FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND ASSAULT WITH DISABILITIES



Understanding Violence: Words to Know

Violence is unwanted or forced sexual touching that includes hitting, assault, rape, and sexual or violent abuse. (RAINN)

- Violence can be hitting, pushing, shoving, name-calling, taking away money, medicine, equipment, a service animal, threats, yelling, and destroying property.

Consent is telling someone yes or hearing someone say yes before touching or having sex.

- People don't use lies, threats, force, pressure, or intimidation to get you to have sex or touch a person.
- People have the right to say "yes or no" at any time or change their minds.

Sexual assault is forced sex that happens when a person does not give consent or say "yes." A person forces someone to do sexual acts that they don't want. (RAINN)

Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence can happen in relationships. Abusers can be a friend or family members, a partner, a spouse, or a caregiver.

Self-Advocacy and Violence Prevention: Facts to Know

- People with disabilities are three times more likely to have violence and assault happen to them. (VERA)
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to have violence and assault happen to them. (VERA)
- Nearly 90% of women with intellectual or developmental disabilities experience sexual assault during their lifetime. (The Arc U.S.)
- These crimes go mostly unrecognized, unprosecuted, and unpunished. (NPR)
- People with disabilities are even more likely to be abused by someone they know. (The Justice Department)

Sexual Rights of People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have the right to have sex and relationships as people without disabilities. The rights include, but are not limited to:

1. People with disabilities can be in consensual relationships where they feel respected and valued.
2. People with disabilities have the right to ask questions about sex, their health, and safety with people they trust.
3. People with disabilities can communicate about relationships and choose whom they want to spend time with.
4. People with disabilities have the right to be safe and free from being hurt, abused, or judged.
5. People with disabilities have the right to advocate for themselves in relationships.

Self-Advocacy and Relationships

People with disabilities can make their own choices about what they want and their sexuality. The choices an individual makes show their needs and wants. It means a person loves themselves and cares about the needs and wants of others. They get the information they need to understand sex and what they should do to stay safe during sex.

What Can You Do If You Experience Sexual or Physical Violence or Abuse?

- If you feel unsafe and want to, you can call 9-1-1
- Call a Sexual Assault Care Provider
- You can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673
- Call a Domestic Violence organization
- You can call National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-332-7385
- You can choose to get Medical Help
- At the hospital, you will have a medical exam, also called a “rape kit.” This exam collects physical evidence of the sexual assault.
- You can do the exam even if you don’t want to go to the police.
- You can contact the police if you choose.
- You can choose to file a report.
- You do not have to file a report, even if the police show up.
- You can choose whether you tell family or friends.
- **If the person is a mandated reporter, they will have to report it to Adult Protective Services.**

How to Help Someone who has been Sexually Assaulted or Abused and Support Self-Advocacy and Choice:

- Listen to them, don’t talk for them unless asked by them to do so.
- Be respectful, don’t judge their choices.
- Focus on the incident and the individual’s needs and wants.
- Help them to choose what they want by empowering their decisions.
- Educate the person on the resources available to them.
- Offer to go to the hospital or police if they want help or file a report.
- Find an advocate or support agency that can work with them to support their choices, wants, and needs.

Places to Get Help and Advocacy

- Centers for Independent Living (CILS) – Able South Carolina, Access Ability, and Walton Options
- SC Independent Living Council
- Domestic Violence Organizations or Shelters
- Sexual Violence Resource Centers
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center has a directory of agencies in your state
- Disability Rights SC