

Violence Against Women with Disabilities

While a disability can make it more difficult for a woman to escape or report abuse, social attitudes towards persons with disabilities are probably a bigger factor in her increased vulnerability to violence.

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 1992)

Prevalence

- ❖ Women with disabilities are abused at a much higher rate than women without disabilities.
- ❖ In Canada there are approximately 1,900,000 women aged 15 and over who have disabilities. It is estimated that approximately 40% of these women with disabilities will be assaulted, sexually assaulted or abused throughout their lifetime.
- ❖ Depending on whether they reside within an institutional or community setting, women with disabilities are 1.5 to 10 times more likely to be victimized than women who are not disabled.

Vulnerability to Abuse

- ❖ Women with disabilities are often more vulnerable to abuse than women without disabilities for the following reasons:
 - Dependence upon a caregiver;
 - Lack of access to support services;
 - Due to mobility, cognitive or communication impairments unable flee or call for aid;
 - Low self-esteem stemming from societal myth and social attitudes.

Sexual Violence

- ❖ Approximately 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually abused in their lifetime.
- ❖ The rate of sexual abuse of girls with disabilities is four times greater than the national average.

- ❖ Approximately 40% to 70% of girls with intellectual disabilities will be sexually victimized before the age of 18.
- ❖ It is estimated that only 20% of cases of sexual abuse perpetrated against women with disabilities are ever reported to the police, community service agencies, or other authorities.

Who are the Perpetrators?

- ❖ The vast majority of violence is inflicted by a person known to the victim.
- ❖ Approximately 89% of abusers are male.
- ❖ Women with disabilities most frequently experience victimization from an intimate partner or spouse, family member or caregiver.

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