

## 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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