

Why are they targeted?

- Women with disabilities (WWD) who are disabled early in life are taught to comply instead of assert, thus they don't know their own bodies. They are taught to comply with authority figures (doctors, police, and caregivers).
- WWD often depend upon the offender for personal care.
- WWD, due to a lack of sex education, may have a harder time distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- WWD choices are often not respected, thus "NO" doesn't mean "NO."
- WWD fear punishment as often threats (loss of care, medicine or home) or demands for secrecy are made.
- WWD may be physically less capable of resisting or getting away from an offender.
- WWD are often isolated, creating heightened desire to meet people and spend time with them. Isolation often includes a lack of support network or friends.
- WWD face negative social values of being inferior or disposable which can lead offenders to think that is permissible.

We believe all people have a right to a life free of physical violence, sexual assault, verbal/emotional abuse, and restriction of personal liberties.

We believe that violence is a societal problem, a learned behavior, and with intervention and education, the cycle of violence can be broken.

We believe in the worth, dignity, and uniqueness of the individual, and we support these values through education, personal growth, self-reliance, and self-determination.

This pamphlet is sponsored in part by the Office of the Attorney General: Division of Victim Services.

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Sexual Assault & Women with Disabilities

Toll Free 24-Hour Crisis Line
1-877-864-9688

Cody Office
1220 13th St.
Cody, WY
307-272-4754

Powell Office*
335 N. Gilbert Street
Powell, WY
307-754-7959
Fax: 307-754-4448

*Powell office is ADA accessible



- Women with disabilities have the right to a life without sexual violence or abuse. Sexual assault on women with disabilities is generally perpetrated by someone known by the victim (i.e. intimate partner, caregiver, family member, doctor, etc.). Many victims give in to extreme pressure by their known assailant through intimidation, threats of removal of care giving, food, medicine, or loss of home. Sexual assault is about power and too often women with disabilities are targeted for their vulnerability and their forced reliance on others.
- Young women with disabilities, especially developmental disabilities are often not taught sexual education, self protection, good touch/bad touch, or the fact they have the right to say no. Instead, they are taught compliance or not allowed to have autonomy of their bodies. They are not afforded protection and are considered non-credible witnesses on their own behalf.
- Women with disabilities are covered under the Wrongs to Adults at Risk 18-6.5 1-1-109 statute, making sexual assault or abuse against women with disabilities a felony. Women with cognitive and communication disabilities are, however, often considered “non-credible” witnesses on their own behalf.
- Society mistakenly believes that women with disabilities are non-sexual, unattractive or are protected.

Society looks at women with disabilities as damaged and often discounts, ignores, or overreacts to accounts of sexual assault or abuse, often causing the victim to recant, withdraw, or deny the assault occurred to keep from being targeted for unwanted attention.

Signs of Sexual Assault or Abuse:

Physical

- Bruises in genital area
- Genital discomfort
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Signs of physical abuse
- Torn or missing clothing
- Unexplained pregnancy

Behavioral

- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Withdrawal
- Atypical attachment
- Avoids specific setting
- Seizures
- Avoids specific adults
- Excessive crying spell
- Regression
- Sleep disturbances
- Disclosure
- Poor self-esteem
- Noncompliance
- Eating disorders
- Resists exams
- Headaches

Women at Most Risk

- Women with multiple disabilities
- Women with developmental disabilities
- Women with communication disabilities
- Women disabled at birth or early childhood

Special Concerns

- Victims with disabilities may not be able to be treated with HIV cocktails or morning after pill due to medications used for their disabilities.
- Victims with disabilities may experience injuries from the assault (i.e. forced removal of catheter, broken bones, seizures, etc.).
- Victims with disabilities may experience changes in their disabilities (i.e. MS or CP gets worse, diabetes not controllable, etc.).
- Victims with sensory disabilities may need specialized interview techniques that are directed at sensory perceptions/memory.
- Victims with disabilities may need specialized advocacy and forms (i.e. materials in Braille, on tape, sign language interpreter, etc.).
- Trace evidence may be on durable medical equipment. If confiscated for evidence, replacement equipment may need to be obtained.
- If caregiver is perpetrator, replacement caregiver services may need to be obtained, or a different residence is located.