

Empowering People with Disabilities to Recognize and Report Abuse



WELCOME

Kecia Weller and Mark Starford

Presenters

Kecia Weller

- Employed: UCLA Tarjan Center - UCEDD
- Founding member Silence = Violence Network
- Member CA State Rehabilitation Council
- Former member CA State Developmental Disabilities Council
- Former member CA Developmental Services Task Force

Mark Starford

- Director, Board Resource Center. BRC is a human rights based group that provides accessible training and tools that advance self-determination, community engagement and quality of life.
<http://www.brcenter.org/>

Webinar Agenda



My #MeToo Story

Silence = Violence Network

The Abuse Epidemic

Empowerment

Outreach and Awareness

Final Thoughts

Resources



My #MeToo Story

“ Shaken up, I called my social service agency for help and reported the rape to my case manager. My case manager listened and filled out a report without offering any support.”

“ The system failed me; law enforcement, my case worker and the case management agency. As a result, I sank into a deep depression for several years.”

“ I have been in recovery and found my voice.”



Abused and Betrayed Series: The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About



2.18

- 7 times more likely to experience sexual assault
- Cases are underreported
- Need to rely on others
- At risk all the times
- Rarely prosecuted



The Network:

A network of 34 state agencies and advocacy organizations working to support persons with disabilities and older persons to live free of abuse, feel safe and valued.

If violence occurs, services and the legal system will respond respectfully.



Silence = Violence



34 Network Partners

- Self - Advocates
- CFILC CA Foundation For Independent Living Centers
- CA DD Council
- Arc of California
- Disability Rights California
- Older Persons Advocacy Organizations
- Adult Protective Service
- Oothers

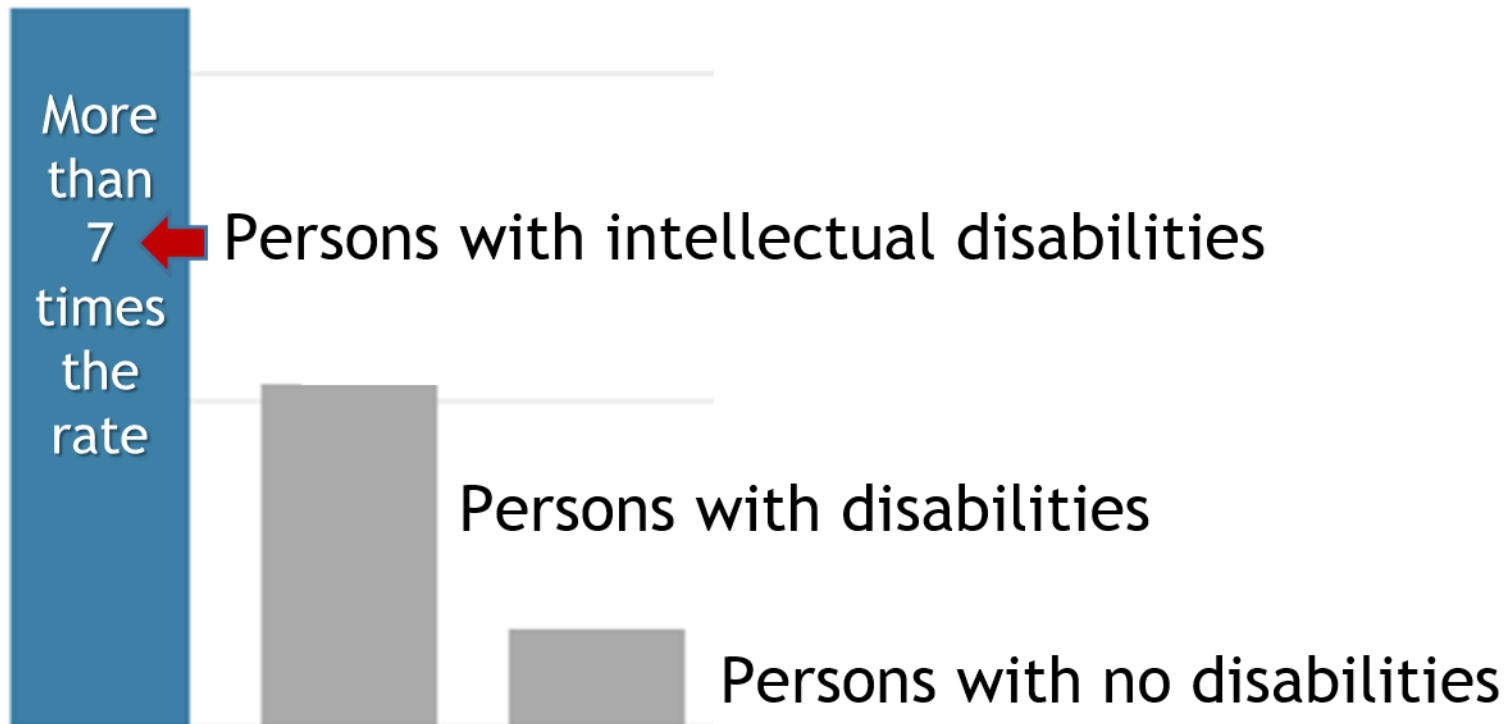


Silence = Violence



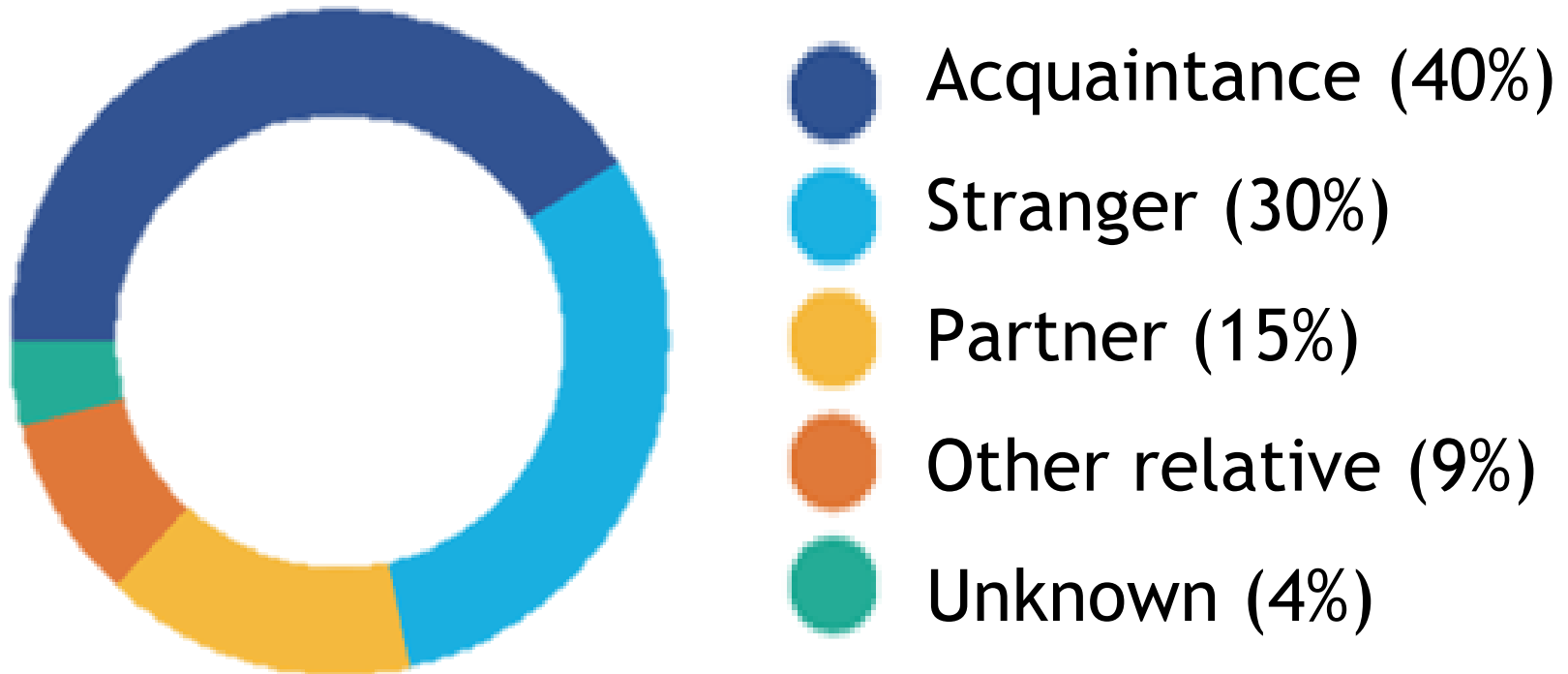
The Epidemic

Sexual Assault Rates Among People With I/DD, 2011-2015



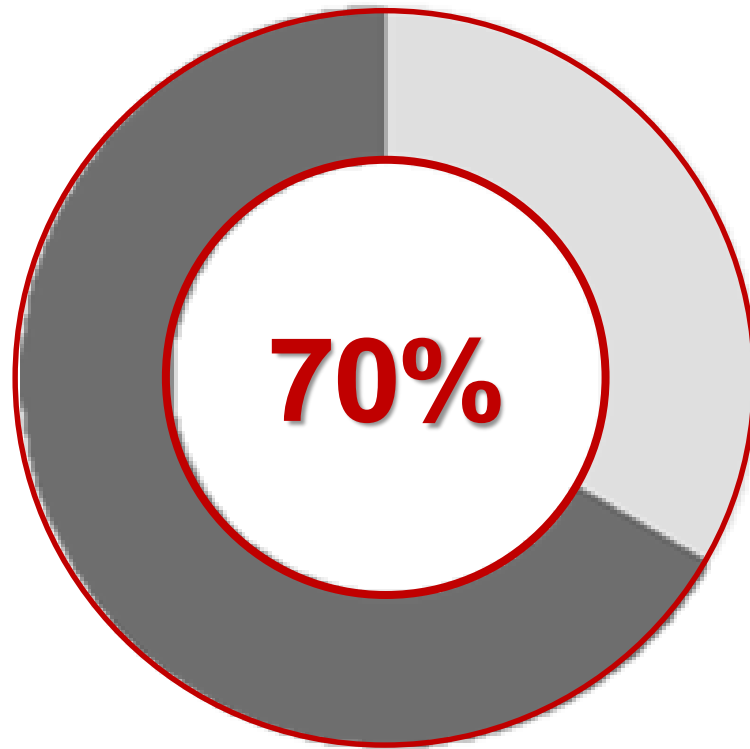


Who Commits the Abuse?





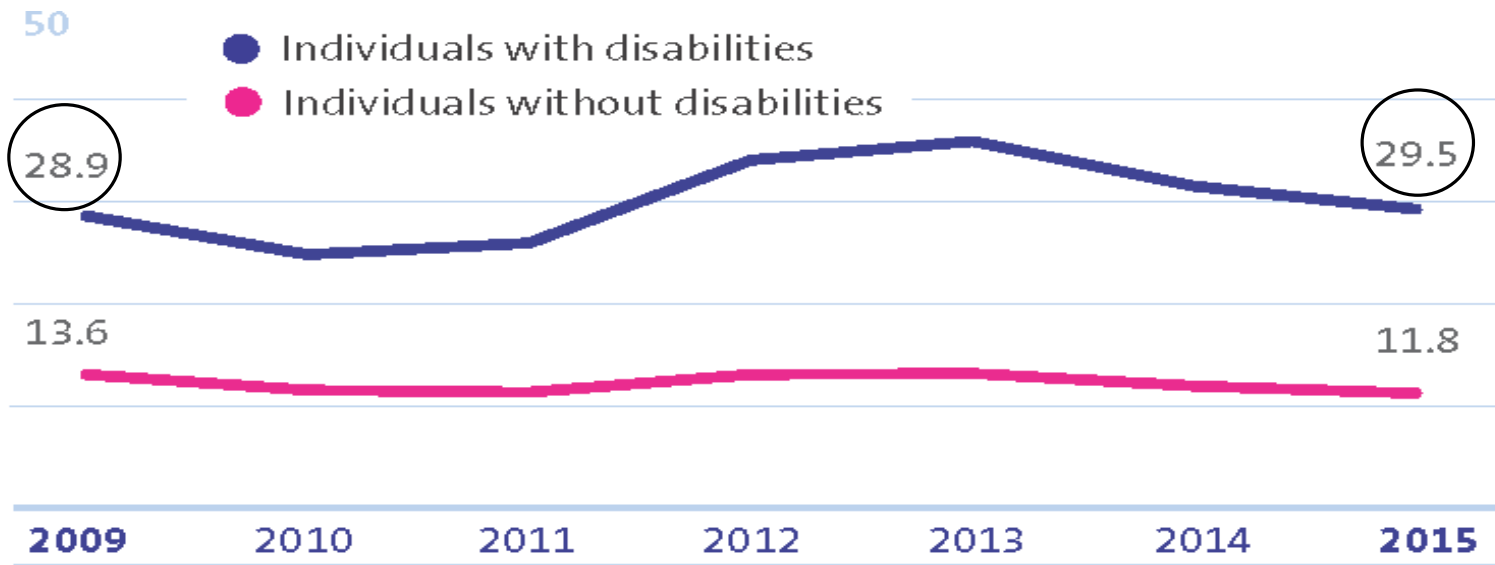
Reporting Dilemma



Over **70%** of cases go unreported



Crimes Against People with Disabilities



Violent Victimization^B

rate per 1,000 people age 12 or older



Reasons For Not Reporting

Loss of home

Loss of job, services and/or friends

Not being believed

Taught to be compliant

Not taught about rights or how to identify abuse

Told “It was my fault”

Fear of: More abuse, Being blamed



Summary

People with Disabilities

- High percentage know their offender
- Report crime less frequently
- Disability makes it difficult to report
- Reporting and investigation is delayed
- Abuse that happens in programs is often treated as an employment issue, and NOT reported

Empower

Helping someone be stronger and more confident in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

Empowering People

Take it slow -

- People will share in their own time
- Too often people try to tell a person what to do.
 - “You have to
 - “If I were you, I would

As an ally -

- Reach out to community services and advocacy programs to ensure they provide accessible person-centered supports

Providing Support

- Listen
- Understand that the person may be frozen from fear
- Don't over simplify - "*it's not that bad!*"
- Reassure that you are there for support
- Help locate local resources
- Don't speak for the person unless they specifically ask

Recognizing Abuse

- Physical evidence on their body
- Emotional outbursts not related to a current incident
- Sudden change in a relationship with someone
- Expressing
 - Helplessness
 - Apologetic or meek
 - New agitation, anxiety, or apprehension
 - Loss of interest in daily activities



Warning Signs

Abusive Personality

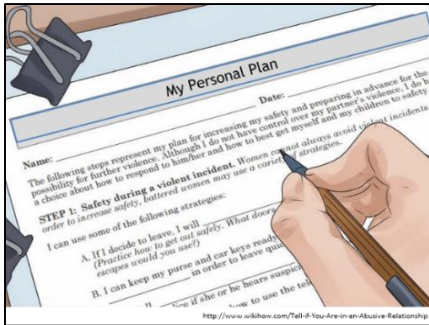
- Closeness: Too close too fast and too physical
- Isolation: Tries to cut the person off from people they feel close to
- Force: Uses “playful” force
- Verbal: Criticizes or says blatantly hurtful things



Open Communication

To facilitate open communication:

- Meet in a comfortable setting with limited distractions
- Meet without others who can influence person speaking freely
- Always use everyday/plain language - easy to understand
- Be patient, it is difficult to talk about abuse



Personal Safety Plan

- Put emergency contacts in cell phone
- Identify a “Trusted Person”
- Insist advocacy groups talk about safety
- Reach out to neighbors
- Be an active community member



Outreach

All of us can participate in community events to increase public awareness of the “silent epidemic”.

Examples include:

- Blogs and social media
- Awareness campaigns: local and state
- Conference presentations
- State and local networks



Final Note

- Self-advocates can and must take the lead!
- All of us must become aware of the warning signs of abuse
- Sharing stories can help heal
- Advocate for better laws
- Training for law enforcement and victim service providers is needed to help people be more willing to report
 - ❑ Accessible accommodations, respectful interviews

Resources

National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability website:

<https://www.thearc.org/NCCJD/resources/by-audience/self-advocates>

World Institute on Disability:

Curriculum on Self-Protection for People with Disabilities and Elders Living Independently

<https://worldinstituteondisabilityblog.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/cape-complete.pdf>

The Family Place

<http://www.familyplace.org/resource/signs-of-abuse>

NPR: The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About

<https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>

