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
“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

- 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
- Others
The Epidemic

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

More than 7 times the rate

Persons with intellectual disabilities

Persons with disabilities

Persons with no disabilities

Who Commits the Abuse?

- Acquaintance (40%)
- Stranger (30%)
- Partner (15%)
- Other relative (9%)
- Unknown (4%)

Over 70% of cases go unreported

Reporting Dilemma

# Crimes Against People with Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Individuals with disabilities</th>
<th>Individuals without disabilities</th>
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<td>28.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>29.5</td>
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**Violent Victimization**

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

http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/legislature/Principles/102801.htm
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

https://www.verywellfamily.com/
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

Adapted from “Signs to Look for in a Battering Personality,” a Project for Victims of Family Violence in Fayetteville, Arkansas.
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

https://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5145
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

http://www.centerforpreventionofabuse.org/?page_id=1328
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

The Family Place
http://www.familyplace.org/resource/signs-of-abuse

NPR: The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About
Questions