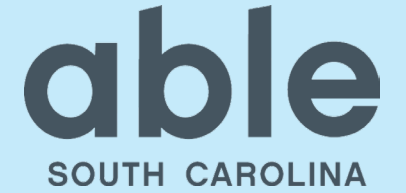


The Intersection of Violence and Disability

Training for Professionals to Ensure Safe, Accessible,
and Affirming Services for All!

Mary Trunk, Violence Prevention and Survivor Services Coordinator
Dori Tempio, Director of Community Outreach and Consumer Rights
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Today's Presenters



Dori Tempio

She/Her/Hers

Director of Community Outreach and
Consumer Rights



Mary Trunk

She/Her/Hers

Violence Prevention and Survivor Services Coordinator



Who We Are

Able SC is a disability-led organization seeking transformational changes in systems, communities, and individuals.

Since 1994, we've remained a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability nonprofit that seeks to make South Carolina a national model of equity and inclusion for all people with disabilities.

- We are the state's oldest and largest federally recognized disability-led organization.
- More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of our staff are people with disabilities, as are over half of our Board of Directors.

We practice coequality, disability justice and representation, and true inclusion through consumer-driven independence and disability pride.

We didn't just learn this.

As people with disabilities, our work doesn't end when we leave the office. Disability is part of who we are. We live this every day.

Able SC's Mission & Vision



Mission

We are an organization of people with disabilities leading the charge to:

- **Equip** people with disabilities with tools to foster pride and to direct their own lives;
- **Educate** the community to challenge stereotypes and eliminate barriers; and
- **Advocate** for access, equity, and inclusion at the individual, local, state, and national level.

Vision

A South Carolina that is a national model of equity and inclusion for all people with disabilities.



Understanding the Intersection of Disability and Violence or Abuse

Disability According to the ADA



- A disability is a substantial limitation in being able to perform one or more daily living activities.

Specific Disabilities

- Cognitive Disabilities
- Physical and Mobility Disabilities
- Speech Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities
- Psychiatric Disabilities
- Hearing Disabilities
- Visual Disabilities
- Intellectual Disabilities
- Developmental Disabilities
- Health Disabilities
- Temporary Disabilities



How Common is Disability?

- **1 in 4** Americans has a disability
- **1 in 3** South Carolinians has a disability

(Source: 2014 US Census Data; 2020 CDC data for SC)

What is Ableism?

- More than just individual attitudes
- Rooted in the history of deliberate exclusion and oppression of people with disabilities across systems
- **Labels disabled bodies and minds as valueless, disposable, scary, or “other”**
- Ableism can take the form of:
 - Dehumanizing stereotypes
 - Negative assumptions and attitudes
 - Exclusion of PWD from public life

Types of Barriers to Receiving **able** Services

able
SOUTH CAROLINA

- Architecture
- Transportation
- Policies
- Programs
- Social
- Attitude

What can Inaccessible Services Look Like?

- Using complicated medical terminology instead of explaining concepts
- Poorly worded/confusing or compound questions
- Absence of American Sign Language or alternative communication devices/methods
- Professionals speaking to another person (family, aide) or an interpreter instead of the individual
- Patient documents not available in alternative formats (examples: Braille, digital formats, visual guides, plain language, etc.)

Avoiding Ableism as a Victim/Survivor Service Provider

- Allow people with disabilities to make decisions about reporting.
- Encourage individuals to reach out for services in the community.
- Assist people with disabilities in acquiring accommodations and accessing survivor services.
- Have high expectations for people with disabilities and let them make mistakes.

Talking about Disability

Words matter!

“Disability” is not a Bad Word!

- Sometimes, people use euphemisms to describe disability because of social stigma and a history of oppression.
- **Euphemisms (YOU-fa-mizms)**: words and phrases used as a substitute when the phrase it replaces is considered impolite, vulgar, or inappropriate.
- Examples of euphemisms:
 - “Special needs”
 - “Differently abled”
 - “Handi-capable”
 - “Physically challenged/impaired”

Two Approaches to Respectful Language

- **Person-first language:**

- “person with (a disability)”
- Emphasizes the person before the disability
- Ex: “My neighbor Ronnie is a person with albinism. He told me this brand of sunscreen is the absolute best.”

- **Identity-first language:**

- “disabled person”
- Emphasizes pride in disability culture
- Ex: “I just met my daughter’s new art teacher, Kara. She’s disabled and uses a cane that has pink rhinestones all over it! I want to do the same thing to mine!”

Words Reinforce our Beliefs about People with Disabilities



Negative associations:

- “Nonverbal”
- “Low/high functioning” autistic
- “Handicapped” parking/bathroom
- “MR” / the r-word
- “Wheelchair-bound”/“confined to a wheelchair”



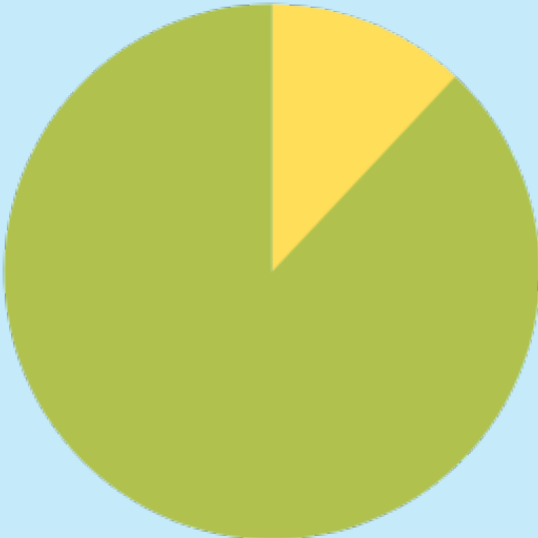
Positive associations:

- Non-speaking
- Autistic
- Accessible parking/bathroom
- Person with I/DD, person with (specific disability)
- Wheelchair user

Violence by the Numbers

Reviewing statistics on abuse against people with disabilities.

How Common is Abuse Against People with Disabilities?



12%
of total U.S. population



4x
More likely to
be victim of
violent crime

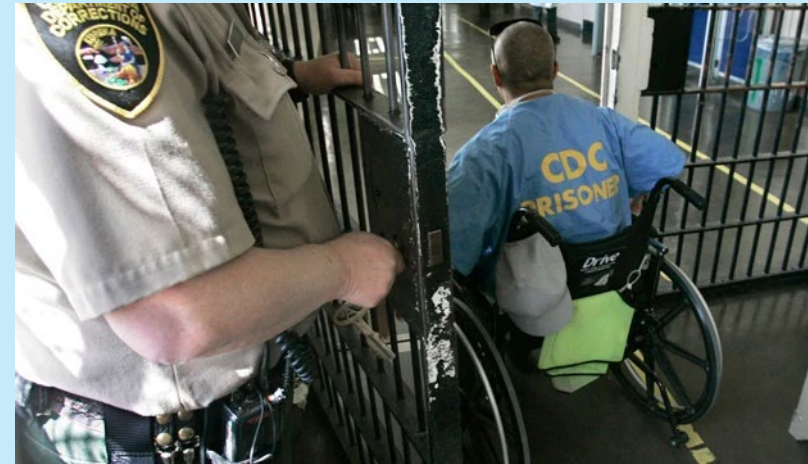


3x
More likely to be
sexually assaulted

(Source: Vera Institute of Justice; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Who's not Being Counted in this Data?

- **Two million people with disabilities living in:**
 - Nursing homes
 - Hospital facilities
 - Correctional and juvenile institutions



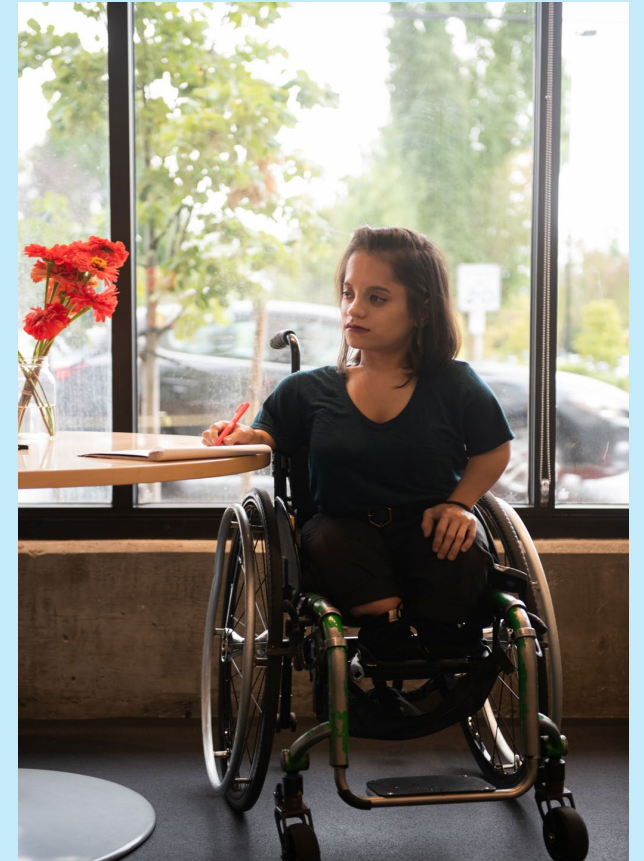
(Source: Center on Disability)

Which Disabled People are the most at Risk?

- **People with specific disability types:**
 - I/DD and/or cognitive disabilities
 - Psychiatric Disabilities
 - Multiple Disabilities
- **Those who also hold other marginalized identities:**
 - Women with disabilities
 - Black / Indigenous / people of color
 - LGBTQ+

Women with Disabilities and Domestic Violence

- Women with disabilities are more likely than women without disabilities to:
 - experience **more severe** victimization
 - experience abuse for **longer duration**
 - be victims of **multiple episodes** of abuse
 - be victims of a **larger number of perpetrators**



(Source: Vera Institute of Justice)

Image courtesy of Affect the Verb

Men with Disabilities and Sexual Violence

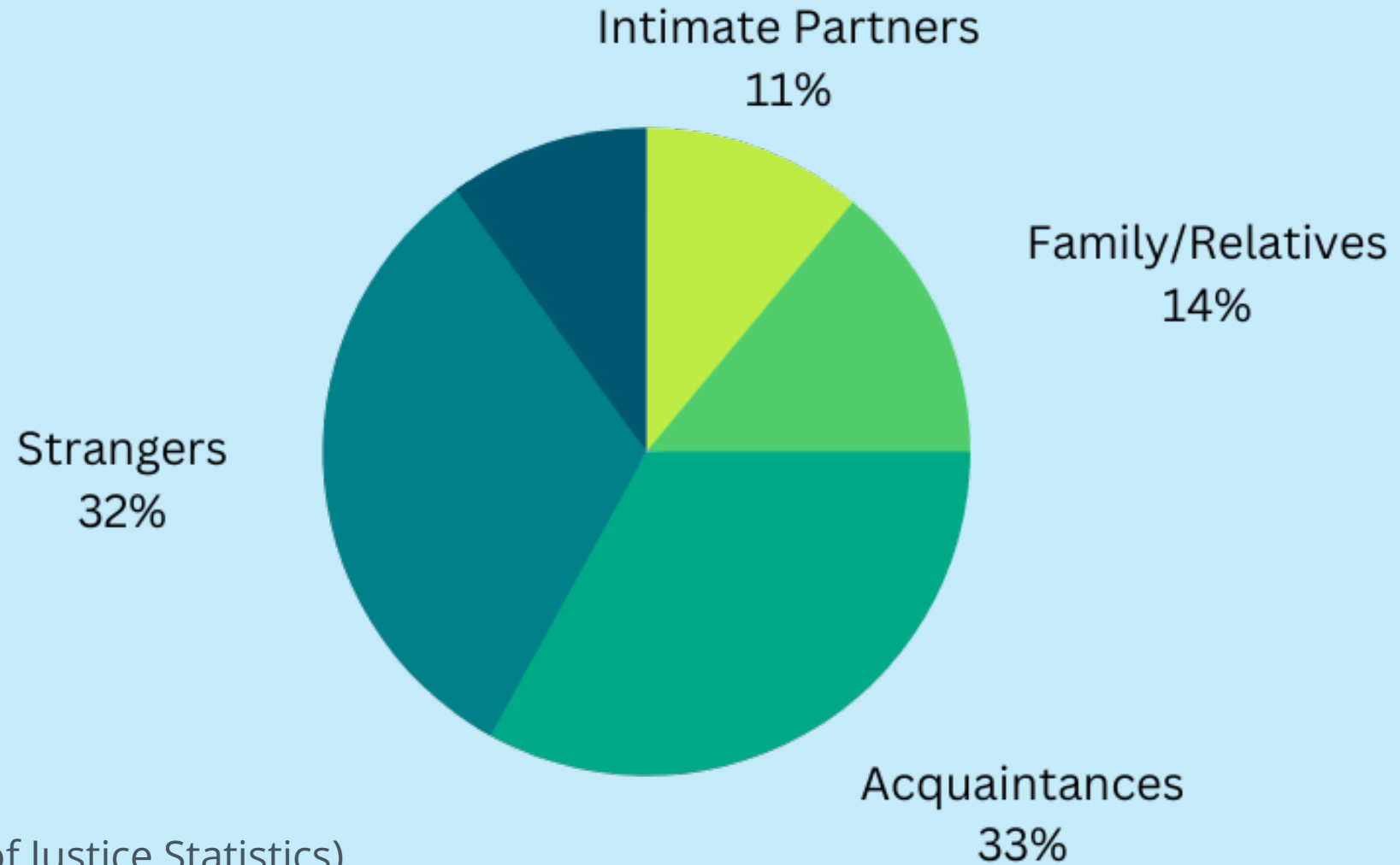
- **14% of men with disabilities** reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives, compared to **4% of men without disabilities**.

Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Abuse

- People with intellectual disabilities are **7 times** more likely to be sexually assaulted than their nondisabled peers.
- Persons with I/DD had the **highest rate of violent victimization** (83.3 per 1,000) among the disability types measured.

(Source: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Who are the abusers?



(Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Disability and Abuse: Causes and Impact

Where does Abuse Happen?

Isolated and/or segregated environments where the person has little control.

- Prisons and jails
- Hospital facilities
- Nursing homes
- Group homes
- Day programs

Why are PWD Harmed More?

Social and situational factors increase abuse risk:

- Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities (ableism)
- Isolation
- Lack of accessible transportation
- Relying on others for care
- Communication barriers
- Lack of education about healthy relationships
- Lack of knowledge about local resources for help/support
- Poverty
- Discouraged from exercising autonomy

How do Abusers Harm and Exploit PWD?

- Abusers exploit roles where they are **trusted to provide needed care**:
 - Physical and medical support
 - Household and money management
- Abusers exploit the **conditions** that systemic ableist oppression creates:
 - **Isolation**: Need for emotional support, desire for connection, lack of access to communication tools
 - **Poverty**: Need for financial support

Less Autonomy + Options = More Risk:

- **Systemic oppression creates conditions** that limit autonomy, cut off connection to community, and reduce available options
- Many PWD are **forced to rely on abusers or endure abusive conditions** in order to access:
 - Financial support
 - Personal and medical care
 - Social and emotional connection

Victim Services for People with Disabilities



- In 2010–2014, only 13 percent of violent crime victims with disabilities received assistance from non-police victim services agencies.
- (Between 2017-19) Nineteen percent of rapes or sexual assaults against persons with disabilities were reported to police, compared to 36% of those against persons without disabilities.

(Source: Vera Institute of Justice; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Why Don't PWD Report Abuse More?

- **Fear of retaliation or rejection:**
 - Not reporting feels safer
 - Potential of institutionalization and/or loss of independence
 - Reports are dismissed + minimized, “witness credibility” challenged
- **Don't expect to be believed:**
 - Low rates of prosecution
 - Sentences are lighter for people who abuse people with disabilities—esp. sexual assault
- **Information on health and safety is blocked or withheld:**
 - Not given info on how to recognize, interpret, or react to abuse
 - Not included in DV/SA education outreach

PWD are Presumed Incapable of Making Choices!

Lack of confidentiality

- Professionals who speak to caregivers instead of the person, even when they are right there in the room
- Not asking the person's preference or permission before discussing sensitive topics in front of family members or caregivers
- Refusing to learn a person's alternate communication methods and only talking to their caregiver

PWD are Presumed Incapable of Making Choices Continued!

Mandatory Reporting Policies

- PWD excluded from life-changing decisions in situations of abuse/neglect

Legal Guardianship

- PWD legally barred from making decisions about their own lives
- Extremely difficult to reverse

Assumption of Incapability Leads to Ableist Responses with Survivors and Victims with Disabilities:



- We don't serve people with disabilities.
- Because you have a brain injury, you can't accurately explain what happened to you.
- No one would abuse someone with a disability.
- People with disabilities should not be able to make decisions for themselves or access the supports that they say they need.
- Why would you accuse your caregiver/family member of abuse? They do so much for you.
- People with disabilities are asexual and can't participate in consensual romantic/sexual relationships.
- We can't change the way our services are delivered; individuals need to be able to do things the "normal" way in order to use our services.

Avoiding Ableism as a Victim/Survivor Service Provider Continued

- Give individuals the opportunity to participate in services. Don't automatically assume they can't do something or need your help.
- Pay attention to the environment
 - Accessibility
 - Equity
 - Inclusion

Stay in touch



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- Join Email List:
Text ABLESC to 72572
- Social Media:
 - Facebook: @AbleSC
 - Twitter: @able_sc
 - Instagram: @able_sc
 - LinkedIn: Able South Carolina
 - YouTube: Able South Carolina

Resources about Disability, Abuse, and Access to Independence



- National Council on Independent Living, Task Force on Violence and Abuse of People with Disabilities: www.ncil.org
- U.S. Department of Justice's ADA home page: www.ada.gov
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: www.nsvrc.org
- Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center: www.dbtac.vcu.edu
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.ncadv.org
- Job Accommodation Network: www.jan.wvu.edu

Educational Resources for Learning about Disability and Abuse

- End Abuse of People with Disabilities website: www.endabusepwd.org
- Victims with Physical, Cognitive, or Emotional Disabilities, OVC – e-guide <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/4-supporting-victims/45-victimpopulations/victims-with-physical-cognitive-or-emotional-disabilities/>
- Collaborating to Help Trafficking Survivors: Emerging Issues and Practice Pointers
<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/ImmigrantWomen/Collaborating%20to%20Help%20Trafficking%20Survivors%20Final.pdf>
- Disability-specific power and control wheel:
<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/DisabledCaregiverPCwheel.pdf>

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- *West Virginia Sexual Assault Free Environment Project. (n.d.). Sexual Victimization of Persons with Disabilities: Prevalence and Risk Factors. Retrieved from https://www.arcnj.org/file_download/eeead953-679c-4937-9f6e-596248f9261e.*