

Arc Guide to Risk Factors for Abuse

Individuals with disabilities tend to experience abuse more often and at a higher severity than individuals without disabilities.

There are a number of factors that increase the risk of abuse for individuals with disabilities. Some risk factors for individuals with disabilities include:

- Reliance on others to meet some or all of their daily living needs
- Lack of or fewer social networks
 - Contact with others may be limited by to and/or by the caregiver
 - Social isolation is associated with an increased risk of all type of abuse
 - Denial of opportunities for appropriate relationships with others
- Societal views/opinions that
 - Questions the credibility of people with disabilities as witnesses
 - Views people with disabilities as lacking intelligence
 - Views people with disabilities as being non-sexual
 - Offenders see people with disabilities as easy targets
- Lack of training provided to people with disabilities on
 - Basic sex education
 - How to advocate for themselves
 - How to defend themselves
- Communication Barriers
 - Communication difficulties are especially enhanced if the individual is considered non-verbal and/or doesn't have a relationship with a trusted individual who speaks their language
 - Inaccessible public and private sector services caused by the lack of readily available ways to engage in effective communication
- Economic Barriers
 - Obstacles people with disabilities experience in education and employment limit their ability to become financially independent and secure
- Personal barriers
 - Victims may not recognize they are being abused especially when they fall prey to someone close to them
 - Victims may not be sure what is considered abuse especially during daily hygiene care
 - Victims may not know how to report abused and/or who to report to
 - Victims may be concerned that caregiver perpetrators may withhold or threaten to withhold necessary services such as food, healthcare, daily hygiene, money, social access and/or transportation. This is enhanced based on the degree the victim is dependent on the perpetrator

For further information or advocacy services, contact The Arc Greater Twin Cities at 952-920-0855 or visit www.arcgreatertwincities.org. Thank you!

This document is not legal advice, and should not be construed as such. Thus, no information herein should replace the sound advice of an attorney.

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- Attitudinal Barriers
 - Myths, negative views and stereotypes about people with disabilities that result in the denial of equal opportunity, equal protection, and equal participation in community life
- Service System Barriers
 - Service providers/professionals may not question the caregiver's actions or versa
 - Domestic and sexual violence service providers may not have the appropriate resources and/or knowledge to provide services to an individual with a disability

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