



Arc Guide to Abuse Risk Factors

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



- 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

For further information or advocacy services, contact The Arc Minnesota at 952-920-0855 or toll-free at 833.450.1494 or visit www.arcminnesota.org. (Please note: *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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