

# **Disability - Awareness Assessment Tool for Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Service - Providers**

## **Working with Women with Disabilities and Women who are Deaf**

### **Section ONE: Introduction**

This Assessment Tool is intended to increase awareness about abuse of women with disabilities and women who are Deaf for providers working in domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking programs.<sup>1</sup> Raising awareness of disability-related violence, while working to improve overall access of our programs, will ensure that we are providing culturally appropriate safety options for women with disabilities and women who are Deaf.

This Assessment Tool is organized into 3 Sections:

- #1 Introduction
- #2 Disability Awareness Assessment Questions
- #3 Strategic Planning Guide

In section #2, the questions are organized to address specific elements that most domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking programs have as part of their overall program, including:

- 1) Intake and Referral
- 2) Emergency Shelter
- 3) Case Advocacy – Case Management /Planning
- 4) Medication Management
- 5) Communication Needs
- 6) Children’s Program
- 7) Staff and Volunteer Training
- 8) Transitional Housing
- 9) Cross-Agency Collaboration
- 10) Transportation
- 11) Building Accessibility

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The overall goals of this Assessment Tool are to assist volunteers and advocates in looking at their practice and agency protocols for ways they already support women with disabilities who are survivors of violence, and to take a deeper look at their programs to assess how accessibility can be improved. This Tool might also help identify specific action steps you and your program could adopt that would increase awareness, collaboration and outreach efforts for increasing overall accessibility and ending violence against women with disabilities.

Types of violence experienced by women with disabilities and women who are Deaf is similar to violence experienced by women without disabilities, such as physical violence, sexual assault, emotional / psychological abuse, financial exploitation, stalking and identity theft. Additional disability-related forms of violence targeted specifically towards women with disabilities or women who are Deaf include destroying adaptive and/or communication equipment; abuse by personal assistants; refusing or neglecting to attend to an important personal need such as using the bathroom, eating or drinking; intentional medication mismanagement; or *threatening* any of these above behaviors. These behaviors are violent and abusive.

### **Violence affects women and men with disabilities**

All women are at risk of experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. However, women with disabilities are at increased risk for abuse, may experience this abuse over a longer period of time, and may have multiple perpetrators, including personal attendants who may be spouses, family members and/or professional paid assistants.

We do not yet know a lot about the abuse experiences of men with disabilities because this area has not received much attention. However, there is reason to believe that abuse and violence is a real concern for men with disabilities. Men may not talk about the violence they are experiencing because they do not want to be seen as vulnerable, they fear not being believed if they do tell someone, and may believe that nothing can be done to stop the violence. Please keep men with disabilities in mind as you consider how you respond to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

### **Mandatory reporting requirements**

In best practice, it is important to explain to survivors if you are a mandatory reporter. Making sure they understand your role as a mandatory reporter as well as an advocate will increase their trust. We encourage you to ALWAYS tell survivors if you are a mandatory reporter, and work WITH

them to report violence / abuse. Be aware of your state's statutes and laws related to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, financial exploitation and hate crimes against people with disabilities. If you suspect abuse, a mandated report may need to be filed with Adult Protective Services, and may also need to be reported to law enforcement. It is important to know who to call and how Protective Service and law enforcement agencies work together in your area to handle mandatory abuse reports involving people with disabilities.

### **Self-care**

As a Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault or Stalking Advocate, think about ways to take care of yourself as you discuss with other staff members issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking against the people you serve. Working on issues of violence, creating safety-plans, and listening to others share their experience of surviving mistreatment can be difficult, intimidating and re-traumatizing. These conversations can be even more troubling if you are a survivor. It is important to take care of yourself and create personal boundaries as you do your advocacy and work with your team members. Some ways to build-in self-care activities might include talking with your colleagues about how you are feeling, attending support groups, learning how to be an effective abuse advocate, and identifying and trying to heal from abuse that you may have experienced.

## **Section TWO: Disability Awareness Assessment Tool**

Section TWO looks at the ways you currently provide services to women with disabilities and women who are Deaf. You may also learn additional ways to enhance your program's accessibility and cultural awareness of women with disabilities and women who are Deaf. Questions within each section ask the level to which disability awareness is incorporated into these programmatic elements.

### **1. Intake and Referral**

Do you keep statistics on the number of women with disabilities who have used your domestic violence services?

Yes                      No                      Not sure

Do you ask in your phone screening if clients have additional needs / accommodations?

Yes                      No                      Not sure

If your organization is unable to meet the needs of a client with a disability for any reason, are referrals made to other shelters or service providers?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If so, who are these referrals? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is your organization networking and communicating on a regular basis with agencies who can assist women with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, which agencies?: \_\_\_\_\_

In the past 12 months, has your program provided services to women:

who use wheelchairs?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

with developmental disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

with mental illness?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

with sensory disabilities (e.g. low vision and / or hearing impairment)

Yes                  No                  Not sure

with mobility disabilities

Yes                  No                  Not sure

using augmentative / alternative communication devices?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

In the past 12 months, has your program been unable to provide service to a client with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there a written policy for referring persons with disabilities to other agencies?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, what is the policy?: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **2. Emergency Shelter Program**

Do you have printed material targeted specifically to women with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, is it accessible (Brailled / large print) and available? \_\_\_\_\_

## **3. Case Advocacy / Management / Planning**

Is there an "accessibility needs" line item on your agency's budget?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do you have a policy for the types of support shelter staff and volunteers can reasonably provide (e.g. feeding, dressing, toileting, etc.)?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, what is the policy: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do staff and volunteers know how and when to contact personal assistant / nursing care agencies?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe the procedures: \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your program have a list of resources related to abuse and victimization against women / people with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Are these resource materials available by phone?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Are these resource materials available in-person to survivors?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Does your program allow personal assistance providers to accompany clients to shelter?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do you have a program staff member who is specifically assigned to provide services to women with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, who: \_\_\_\_\_

What is that person's primary field of training? (check all that apply)

- \_\_\_\_\_ rehabilitation counseling
- \_\_\_\_\_ peer counseling (1:1 peer relationship with another woman who experiences a disability)
- \_\_\_\_\_ psychology
- \_\_\_\_\_ public health
- \_\_\_\_\_ nursing
- \_\_\_\_\_ social work
- \_\_\_\_\_ community volunteer
- \_\_\_\_\_ other.... (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Does the shelter program allow service animals, such as seeing eye dogs?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

In safety-planning with women, do you have additional strategies that women with disabilities can do to increase safety and prevent violence?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, what are the unique disability-related safety planning strategies you encourage?

- know how and were to arrange for emergency back-up care givers / support people
- have proper medications available / accessible
- know accessible transportation options / routes
- have mobility / communication / adaptive equipment available

know how to protect themselves from financial abuse if they have a guardian or representative payee

Does your program offer any of the following? (check all that apply)

- Disability awareness training for your program staff and volunteers
- Education of criminal justice personnel regarding disability and abuse/violence
- Training / technical assistance to other DV / SA / Stalking programs about disability issues
- Training / technical assistance to disability agencies / programs about abuse/violence
- others? \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Medication Management

Do clients have access to their medications at all times?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe this policy: \_\_\_\_\_

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Can clients monitor their medications themselves ?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Can you provide personal lockers or lock boxes for medications for women with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, are these available? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there someone on-site or on-call to help manage complex medication needs for women with disabilities and / or chronic illness?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your program have a policy / plan to work with residents who are prescribed medications by their provider but choose not to take their meds?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe this policy: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Communication

Does your program have a list of on-call sign language interpreters?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, what are their names / contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you have funding set aside to pay for interpreters?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do staff and volunteers know how to accept relay calls from clients who are Deaf or hearing impaired?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Does your agency have TTY?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, is it ready-to-use. \_\_\_\_\_

Is staff trained and comfortable using the TTY?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do the phones have amplification capability?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If you have a TTY number, is this listed on your agency brochure?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Are all agency informational materials, such as security pads, emergency numbers, handouts, maps of the building with fire escape routes, etc., informational sheets, available in alternative format? (e.g. Large print, audio tape, computer disc, Braille)

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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If important safety information is not taped or reproduced in Braille, do you have funds and contacts for brailing such information?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, who could do this work: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you have a staff member or volunteer who could record important information on audio-tape?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, who: \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your alarm system (i.e. smoke alarm, fire alarms, etc.) have visual as well as auditory alarms in each room?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do staff receive training in communication skills for communicating with persons who use augmentative / alternate communication devices?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

## **6. Children's Program**

Can the program accommodate children with disabilities?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, how?: \_\_\_\_\_

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Are there physically accessible play areas for both the children and mothers to use?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

## 7. Attitudinal Accessibility - Staff and Volunteer Training

Does your organization have a philosophy statement regarding best practice procedures for working with women with disabilities?

Yes                      No                      Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your organization have any staff members, board members, or volunteers who self-identify as experiencing a disability?

Yes                      No                      Not sure

Does your agency provide specific in-service disability awareness training for (check all that apply):

Staff  
Volunteers  
Board member  
Administrative personnel  
Others \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how much time is devoted to disability issues in the training?

less than one hour  
one to two hours  
more than two hours

If disability awareness training is provided to staff and volunteers, what awareness was raised?

principles of self-determination  
awareness of harmful disability stereotypes  
independent living philosophy  
Americans with Disabilities Act compliance rules and laws  
the culture of cross-disability and disability sensitivity

How often is in-service disability-related training provided for staff?

never  
less than once a year  
once a year  
more than once a year

How often is in-service disability-related training provided for volunteers?

never

less than once a year  
once a year  
more than once a year

If mandatory staff / volunteer disability training includes disability awareness, who provides the training? (check all that apply)

internal agency staff  
disability service provider  
disability self-advocate  
other (please name)

## 8. Transitional Housing

Are the transitional housing sites accessible for women and children with disabilities?

Yes      No      Not sure      Not applicable (we don't provide transitional housing for any clients).

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you accommodate safe transitional housing for a woman with a disability who needs to leave her home or leave the shelter? (Check all that apply).

Temporarily offer her to put her up in an accessible safe hotel room while arranging more permanent accessible housing  
Contact law enforcement to remove the perpetrator from her home.  
Suggest that she stay with a friend or relative.

Other? Please specify.

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## 9. Cross-agency collaboration

How connected are you with organization working on disability rights and disability-related advocacy issues? Check the option(s) that best match how you have worked with each of the following community organizations, or how you may intend to work with these agencies in the future.

Agency name	Have not yet had contact with this agency	Have assisted a consumer to get in touch with the agency or made referral phone calls	Gave out information to a consumer about the services / supports provided by this agency	We have a contact identified who we work with at this agency	We developed a protocol for working together with this agency	Attended a workshop they hosted	Someone from this agency did an in-service at our agency	We provided training to this agency	Other ways we collaborated with this agency
Protection and Advocacy Legal Councils									
Crime Victim's advocate in prosecutor's office									

<b>Agency name</b>	<b>Have not yet had contact with this agency</b>	<b>Have assisted a consumer to get in touch with the agency or made referral phone calls</b>	<b>Gave out information to a consumer about the services / supports provided by this agency</b>	<b>We have a person identified who we work with at this agency</b>	<b>We developed a protocol for working together with this agency</b>	<b>Attended a workshop they hosted</b>	<b>Someone from this agency did an in-service at our agency</b>	<b>We provided training to this agency</b>	<b>Other ways we collaborated with this agency</b>
<b>Centers for Independent Living (CIL's)</b>									
<b>Arc agency</b>									
<b>United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)</b>									
<b>Other local Disability Advocacy Groups / Agencies</b>									

<b>Agency name</b>	<b>Have not yet had contact with this agency</b>	<b>Have assisted a consumer to get in touch with the agency or made referral phone calls</b>	<b>Gave out information to a consumer about the services / supports provided by this agency</b>	<b>We have a person identified who we work with at this agency</b>	<b>We developed a protocol for working together with this agency</b>	<b>Attended a workshop they hosted</b>	<b>Someone from this agency did an in-service at our agency</b>	<b>We provided training to this agency</b>	<b>Other ways we collaborated with this agency</b>
<b>Adult Protective Service Agency (APS)</b>									
<b>Mental Health Drop-In Centers</b>									
<b>Developmental Disability Centers</b>									
<b>Vocational Rehab.</b>									
<b>Home Health-Care</b>									
<b>Para-transit</b>									

<b>Nat'l Assoc. for the Mentally Ill</b>									
<b>Commiss ion for the Blind</b>									
<b>Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner</b>									
<b>Salvation Army</b>									
<b>Easter Seals</b>									
<b>Develop- mental Disability Councils</b>									
<b>American Sign Lang. Interpret.</b>									
<b>Self-help Hard of Hearing</b>									
<b>Others?</b>									

## 10. Transportation Needs

Does your organization have accessible parking designated?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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Is your organization located near an accessible bus line?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your organization have an accessible van or a way to arrange for accessible transportation accommodations, such as Access - a – Ride, for survivors who need accessible transportation options?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 11. Building Accessibility

Does your building have a flat or gentle-inclined ramped entrance with a 32-inch wide doorway?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Is this the confidential entrance? (Not sure what this means)

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Is access needed to upper or lower floors? (i.e. access is needed if common rooms, counseling rooms, kitchen, playrooms, etc. are located in upper or lower floors).

Yes                  No                  Not sure

If access to upper / lower floors is necessary, do you have a dependable elevator or lift?

Yes                  No                  Not sure

Do you have at least one accessible restroom as follows:

- 32-inch wide doorways to restroom, stall and shower?

Yes            No            Not sure

Do you have handrails or grab bars near the restroom toilet and in the shower?

Yes            No            Not sure

Is there a flat (roll-in) entrance to the shower area?

Yes            No            Not sure

At least one accessible bedroom with a 32-inch wide door?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are doorways to all rooms, such as offices, common meeting rooms, counseling rooms, playrooms, kitchen and living rooms 32 inches wide?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are washing machines front-loading so a woman in a wheelchair can use them?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are the dials on the washing machine on the front on the machine so a woman in a wheelchair can reach them?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are kitchen counters and sinks low enough for a woman in a wheelchair to use them comfortably?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are the dials for the oven / stove on the front of the oven so a woman in a wheelchair can reach them?

Yes            No            Not sure

Are phones lower enough for a woman in a wheelchair to use them comfortably?

Yes            No            Not sure

## **Section THREE: Strategic Planning Guide**

In your work as a domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking advocate, you already provide a great deal of support, prevention and intervention. However, there may be additional information that would be helpful for you in serving survivors with disabilities. Disability-related prevention / intervention activities include educating and empowering survivors, advocating for improved access of community supports, attention towards programmatic policies to ensure inclusion of cultural awareness related to issues experienced by survivors with disabilities, working to establish accessible shelters or safe houses and support group locations. Section THREE of this Assessment Tool gives some additional ideas of what advocates could do, and may highlight what you are already doing, to address the problem of abuse and domestic violence against women with disabilities.

### ***General support for a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking who experiences a disability.***

- ◆ listen without judging their situation
- ◆ do not immediately step in to "help" if they have not specifically asked
- ◆ assure survivors that the violence they are experiencing is NOT their fault
- ◆ offer concrete support and follow-through when they ask for help
- ◆ provide resource numbers and be with them during the phone call if they want your support
- ◆ incorporate safety-planning activities during your working relationship

### ***Leaving an abusive relationship: Ways to support survivors with disabilities.***

- ◆ work with the survivor to create an individualized safety-plan
- ◆ discuss what would go into a safety-plan / safety-kit (e.g. additional medications, phone numbers of support people and personal assistants, money, financial account information, clothes, assistive equipment items, etc.)
- ◆ help strategize about who is a trusted friend / family member / relative / personal assistant
- ◆ help arrange for back-up personal assistance if needed
- ◆ help arrange other details (accessible transportation, housing, shelter stay, healthcare, service animal shelter / care etc.)

### ***Training opportunities for increasing awareness of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking against women with disabilities.***

- ◆ locate or purchase violence prevention resources that specifically address violence against women with disabilities

- ◆ talk to your colleagues and co-workers about what they know and how they advocate for women with disabilities who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking
- ◆ attend a violence-awareness training workshop hosted by your own agency or your local domestic violence / rape crisis / sexual assault prevention program – include awareness of issues related to women with disabilities in the workshop training agenda
- ◆ ask survivors with disabilities about ways they would feel most comfortable talking about abuse / violence
- ◆ work with your agency to incorporate violence awareness / prevention strategies specifically addressing the needs of women with disabilities

**Ways to serve survivors with disabilities who may need *emergency equipment*. (Keep in mind that perpetrators often damage medical or communication devices/equipment in order to increase isolation and dependence.)**

- connect them with the local Durable Medical Equipment provider
- temporarily loan them equipment
- draw on emergency funds designated for this use
- help pay for repairs of assistive equipment
- set aside funds to provide for emergency and back-up medications

**Ways to serve survivors with disabilities who may need *emergency back-up personal assistance*.**

- ◆ actively assist survivors with disabilities in locating alternative / emergency personal assistant services
- ◆ refer to an established personal assistant registry
- ◆ find out from other survivors with disabilities how they located emergency back-up personal assistants
- ◆ work with the survivor to make an emergency contact sheet to include family, friends and personal assistants who can be a natural support network - support people should be told they are part of a emergency back-up support network and are included in the survivor's safety plan
- ◆ contact a Certified Nursing Association or the Visiting Nurses Association to see if they provide emergency back-up personal assistant services