Recognizing and Effectively Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Disability Community

IMAQ
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Check to have it embedded
End the Silence

Sexual Violence

- Sexual Violence is a widespread social problem that affects women and men from all backgrounds, economic status, or every level of society, including people with disabilities.
- It is any type of unwanted sexual contact, ranging from sexual attitudes and actions to rape and murder. Sexual violence can include words and actions of a sexual nature against a person's will [source: 2014).
- These types of offenses are the most underreported crimes in the county [source, 2015].
Incidence and Prevalence

- Nearly 42% of women have experienced some form of sexual violence (CDC, 2013).
- Approximately 1 in 5 women has been raped in her lifetime (CDC, 2014).
- People with disabilities are at a higher risk of being victims of sexual violence (Carr & Thomsen, 2014).
- Men with disabilities were more likely to than men without disabilities to report lifetime sexual violence (6.8% vs 2.3%) (Jones & Mack, 2014).
- Children with intellectual disabilities are 4.5 times as likely as children without disabilities to be sexually abused (Burrucket & Kramer, 2016).

Why is Sexual Violence So Common Among People with Intellectual Disabilities?

- May not understand what is happening.
- May not know how to communicate what is happening to a trusted person.
- May not see they have the right to say "NO" and "TELL".
- Limited sexuality education.
- Fear of retaliation.
- Threats of personal harm.
- Not viewed as credible witness.
- May believe they are responsible.
- They follow what "we" teach them.

Disclosing and Reporting

- Rape is one of the most underreported violent crimes.
- 95% of sexual assaults are never reported to police.
- Only 12% of child sexual abuse is ever reported.
- What does childhood/adolescent sexual violence look like in adulthood?
- Is it vs tolerable stress, behavioral intervention/treatment vs counseling?

- Why underreporting?
  - Fear of retaliation.
  - Will not believe me.
  - "He" knows we're I live.
  - "He" said it was my fault, I asked for it.
Some Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Assault

- Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects
- Nightmares, sleeping problems
- Becoming withdrawn or very clingy
- Becoming unusually secretive
- Sudden unexplained personality changes, mood swings and seeming insecure
- Regressing to younger behaviors, e.g. bedwetting
- Unaccountable fear of particular places or people

Some Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Assault

- Outburst of anger
- Changes in eating habits
- New adult words for body parts and no obvious source
- Talk of a new, older friend and unexplained money or gifts
- Self-harm (cutting, burning or other harmful activities)
- Physical signs, such as, unexplained soreness or bruises around genitals or mouth, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy
- Running away
- Not wanting to be alone with a particular person – staff, family member, transit driver, professional, etc.

Immediately After Disclosure/Reporting

1. Believe the person
2. Listen, don’t interrupt
3. Avoid using the word “story”
4. Gathering accurate information
5. Follow agency protocol, avoid talking to anyone about the disclosure except the “need to know” people
6. Thinking about the possible consequences for all involved
7. Continue support through the disclosure, investigation/s.
Continued Support

- Continue to listen
- Do not judge the person or their account of the event
- Be attentive to your body language and facial expressions
- Be attentive to their body language and facial expressions
- Be aware of triggers
- Take care of yourself

THANK YOU

Contact Information

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