

FACT SHEET

PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THE VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM

The Research

In the past 19 years many researchers have begun to document this overwhelming problem including; Sobsey 1994, Hingsburger 1995 - 2001, Baladerian 1991, Valenti-Hein & Schwartz 1995, Tysika 1998, Davis 1999, and Petersilia, 2000. The numbers reported in these studies vary... but in every case the numbers are staggering.

“According to research, most people with disabilities will experience some form of sexual assault or abuse.” (Sobsey & Varnhagen , 1989)

“Victims who have some level of intellectual impairment are at the highest risk of abuse.” (Sobsey & Doe, 1991)

“97 to 99 percent of abusers are known and trusted by the victim who has developmental disabilities.” (Baladerian, 1991)

“Other studies suggest that 39% to 68% of girls and 16 to 30 % of boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.”

“The likely hood of rape is staggering; 15,000 to 19,000 of the people with developmental disabilities are raped each year in the United States.” (Sobsey, 1994)

“More than 90% of people with developmental disabilities will experience sexual abuse at some point in their lives.”

“Forty-nine percent will experience 10 or more abusive incidents.” (Valenti-Hein & Schwartz, 1995)

“Only three percent of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental disabilities will ever be reported.” (Valenti-Hein & Swartz, 1995)

A report published by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime in 1998; prepared by Cheryl Tysika of the National Organization for Victim Assistance states that, 68% to 83 % of women with developmental disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, 50% higher than the rest of the population; and upwards of 85% of women with disabilities are victims of domestic abuse, in comparison with 25% to 50% of the general population.

“Eighty percent of women and 60 percent of men with developmental disabilities have been sexually abused.” (Hingsburger, 2001)

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