



Domestic Violence Advocacy for People with Disabilities

Lesson 1

**A Distance Learning Course
about applying what you already know
to people who are very much like you.**



Part One – General Orientation

Why are we offering a course on domestic violence advocacy specifically for survivors who have disabilities?



Why DV advocacy for People with Disabilities?

- Have you ever served a survivor with mental health issues and wondered how you could be a better advocate for her?
- Have you ever served a survivor with drug or alcohol problems?



Why DV advocacy for People with Disabilities?

- Have you ever had difficulties communicating with a survivor because she was deaf or because you couldn't understand her?
- Have you ever wondered how to serve a survivor who has a service animal?



Why DV advocacy for People with Disabilities?

- Have you ever worked with a survivor who has difficulty navigating systems because the abuse she experienced has caused PTSD or a brain injury?
- Have you wrestled with problems related to a survivor's medications?



Why DV advocacy for People with Disabilities?

If you have been working in DV advocacy for any length of time, the answer to all of these questions is probably “yes.”

One person in five has a disability. The disability might be obvious or it could be completely unseen to you. This course will talk about disability and what it means to you as an advocate.

Where to begin in advocating for survivors with disabilities?

The first lesson of this course will give you an overview of the experience of people living with disabilities.

The second lesson will help you think about issues faced by people with disabilities who experience domestic violence.

The third lesson will give you some practical tools you can use in your advocacy practice.

The fourth lesson will help you connect with a disability advocate in your community.



Connecting What You Have Learned to Your Work

Throughout the course, you will come across slides that say:

“ADVOCACY PRACTICE”

These slides will suggest practical strategies you can use when serving survivors with disabilities.

Goals of this Course

The goals of the course are to:

- Understand how living with a disability impacts the lives of survivors.
- Learn how people with disabilities are engaged in a civil rights movement, modeled in part on the battered women's movement.
- Learn practical tools that will help you provide better advocacy for survivors with disabilities.
- Develop ideas about building community partnerships with disability advocates.



What is a disability?

In this course we are going to talk about disability very broadly. Some people will say they have a disability, while others will not. Some disabilities are readily apparent, others are “invisible.”

What is a disability?

When we talk about “disability,” we mean anyone with:

- mobility, sensory, or communication issues;
- mental illness or mental health issues;
- deafness or has hearing loss;
- cognitive or developmental disabilities;



What is a disability?

We also include people who have “invisible” disabilities, such as diabetes, traumatic brain injuries or substance use issues.

Other people have medical conditions that result in fatigue or lack of stamina.



What is a disability?

Some Deaf individuals do not identify as having disabilities. They believe that being deaf is not something that needs fixing.

Because many Deaf individuals face barriers in the hearing world, we include the Deaf community in our definition of disability.



What is a disability?

Other individuals may not identify as having a disability. Many older people who experience health or mobility issues do not see themselves as having a disability.

What is a disability?

ADVOCACY PRACTICE

Generally, it is not useful to try and figure out a person's disability. It is more helpful to simply ask what support each person needs to use any of the services you offer.



Violence Against People with Disabilities

Here are some statistics about violence experienced by people with disabilities.

Violence Against People with Disabilities

- Women with a disability are more likely than women without a disability to report experiencing intimate partner violence (37.3% vs. 20.6%). -Armor, 2008
- 80% of women and 30% of men with intellectual disabilities have been sexually assaulted. 50% of those women have been assaulted more than ten times. -Sobsey & Doe, 1991; Sorenson, 2000
- Only 3% of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental disabilities are ever reported. -Valenti-Hein and Schwartz, 1995

Violence Against People with Disabilities

- Women with a disability are more likely to be hit, slapped, pushed, kicked or physically hurt by an intimate partner (30.6% vs. 15.7%).
-Armor, 2008

(from the Roehrer Institute, 1994)

74% of people with psychiatric disabilities who were interviewed experienced physical violence.

- Jim Ward Associates, 1993

- 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. - Stimpson & Best, 1991

Violence Against People with Disabilities

- Women with disabilities are more likely than women without disabilities to report a history of unwanted sex with an intimate partner (19.7% vs. 8.2%) - Armor, 2008

(from the Roehrer Institute, 1994)

- 54% of boys who are Deaf have been sexually abused (compared to 10% of boys who are hearing). - Sullivan, Vernon & Scanlan, 1987
- 50% of girls who are Deaf have been sexually abused (compared to 25% of girls who are hearing). - Sullivan, Vernon & Scanlan, 1987

Violence Against People with Disabilities

Violence against Men with Disabilities

- While most people who seek domestic violence services are women, men who have disabilities are more likely to experience a wide range of violence than men without disabilities.
- As your community partnerships broaden to include disability advocates, you may have more men with disabilities seeking your advocacy services.
- Throughout this course, we have used the pronoun she and her when referring to survivors with disabilities. We acknowledge that men with disabilities may experience domestic violence.



Learning about People with Disabilities

Over the past 30 years, people with disabilities have been engaged in a civil rights struggle. One of the things that has come out of this “disability pride movement” is a new way of talking about disability and how people are affected by it.



Learning about People with Disabilities

“People First Language” is one of the major concepts that has emerged from the movement. People First language is a simple way of respecting people with disabilities and their civil rights movement.

[Click here to read People First Language](#)

or check the Advocacy for People with Disabilities online training page at wscadv.org



Learning about People with Disabilities

ADVOCACY PRACTICE

**Using People First language is
your first step to becoming
an ally of people with
disabilities in their civil
rights movement.**



Learning about People with Disabilities

**Getting Prepared: How to learn about
types of disabilities.**

[Click here to read Ch. 3 of Enough And Yet Not Enough](#)
or check the Advocacy for People with Disabilities online training
page at wscadv.org

Learning about People with Disabilities

ADVOCACY PRACTICE

- In some cases, it may be difficult for you to communicate with survivors with some types of disability (Deaf, speech issues, intellectual or memory issues, etc.).
- Don't be bashful! Ask (and ask again!) what the person might need to overcome communication or service barriers. Show her that you are willing to solve the communication problem.

Quiz

- You've completed Lesson 1 of this course, now it's time to see how much you can remember.
- Click the link below to test yourself and to signal to us that you have completed this section so we can record your credit.
- No worries, no grades.
- [Take the quiz](#)

If this link doesn't work, go to the Advocacy for People with Disabilities online training page at wscadv.org