

What can be done about the problem?

If an appropriate method of instruction is used, such as posters and simple handouts, roll plays and repetitive training, prevention instruction can be successful. Information can be taught on an individual level or in a group setting. Sexual Violence education will not only protect the individual from becoming a victim, it will also help them understand how to avoid offending behaviors.

Prevention information should include facts on:

- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Boundaries
- ◆ Good Touch/Bad Touch
- ◆ Personal Body Rights
- ◆ Feelings
- ◆ Private vs. Public Space

Where should I go for help?

Support Within Reach provides direct Support & Advocacy services for victims 24 hours a day.

Prevention Education training can be done individually or in a group setting. Please contact the office closes to you for more information.

Available Services:

Crisis Intervention ~ Ongoing Support Assistance in obtaining Protection Orders ~ Information ~ Referrals ~ Support Groups ~ Follow-up Assistance



**Itasca County Office:**

1325 4th Street NW  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744  
218.326.5008 • 866.747.5008

**Aitkin County Office:**

204 2nd Street NW  
Aitkin, MN 56431  
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Funding Sources:



Blandin Foundation  
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA



OTTO BREMER FOUNDATION



*Sexual Violence  
and the  
Developmentally Disabled*



## What you should know about sexual violence of the Developmentally Disabled

For many years our society has not acknowledged the fact that developmentally disabled people are sexual beings. It is not only assumed that they do not have sexual thoughts and feelings, but they are also discouraged from expressing them. This creates frustration, both physically and emotionally, and opens the door for sexual abuse and exploitation.

Many people believe that the developmentally disabled are safe from sexual abuse because offenders will feel sorry for them or see them as undesirable. However; these people are in fact “easy targets” for offenders because of their increased vulnerability:

- ◆ Dependence in others for basic needs
- ◆ Easily manipulated
- ◆ Lack of social skills and judgment
- ◆ Lack of prevention knowledge

Sexual violence is defined as any unwanted sexual contact. It includes assault, abuse, harassment, molestation, date rape, incest, marital rape, same gender assault and other unwelcomed sexual contact. It also includes incomplete acts which threaten or humiliate an individual.

*It is estimated that anywhere from 68%-83% of all people with disabilities will experience sexual abuse in their lifetime.*

This represents a 50% higher rate than the rest of the population.

## Who is the offender?

The offender may be a parent or sibling, a date, a helper or anyone that the victim may interact with during the day.

Developmentally disabled people may also be offenders due to lack of education and boundaries. Although it is important to teach prevention information about strangers, it is even more vital to teach basic safety information and appropriate boundaries that can be used at any given time for any situation.



- ◆ 29% of the time the offender is a relative
- ◆ 60% are acquaintances of the victim
- ◆ 11% of the time the offender is a stranger

## What are the signs of Sexual Abuse?

These indicators don't necessarily mean that sexual abuse has occurred, but they should lead you to question the possibility. People who have been sexually abused or assaulted often show certain behavioral and/or physical signs that let us know something is wrong. Some of these may be:

- ◆ Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- ◆ Unreasonable fears of people or places
- ◆ Shame about his or her body
- ◆ Self inflicted physical abuse
- ◆ Ongoing fear of a specific person

## How do Victims feel?

Victims have a wide variety of feelings and emotions. Some of the most common are:

- ◆ **Fear**
  - ~ Of the abuser
  - ~ That it may happen again
  - ~ That they will be in trouble if they tell
- ◆ **Guilt**
  - ~ Did I cause this?
  - ~ Could I have made it stop?
- ◆ **Embarrassment**
  - ~ Any sexual behavior - especially when forced
  - ~ Can be very difficult to talk about
- ◆ **Anxiety and Panic**
  - ~ Shortness of breath
  - ~ Shaking
  - ~ Unable to leave their home