

## Our Mission

The mission of the New York State (NYS) Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD) is to enhance the lives of New Yorkers with developmental disabilities and their families through programs that promote self-advocacy, participation, and inclusion in all facets of community life.



## NYS CDD and Preventing Domestic and Sexual Violence

The NYS CDD and all other states' developmental disabilities councils were established by the federal [“Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act.”](#) Under this legislation, Developmental Disabilities (DD) Councils in each state have a vital role in educating the public about current research,



strategies, models, and the needs and preferences of people with DD and their families on important issues such as domestic and sexual violence against people with disabilities. The NYS CDD supports policies and practices that promote self-advocacy, community participation, and inclusion of people with DD and their families.

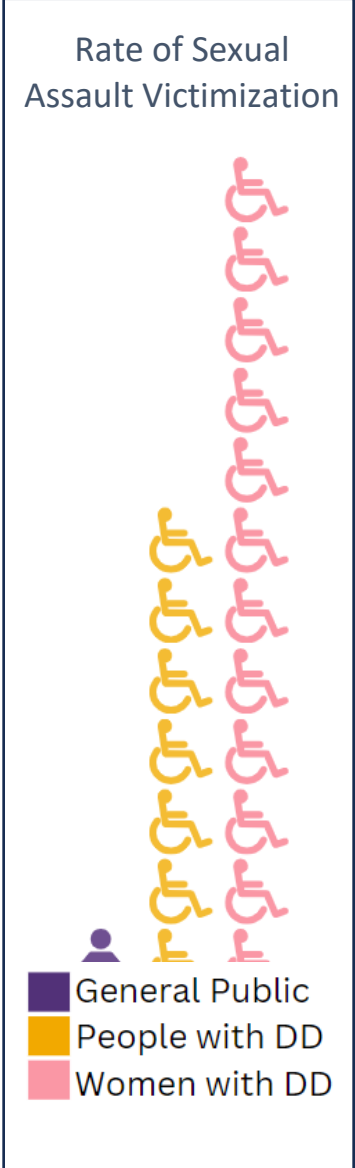
# Background

People with DD experience abuse and sexual assault at a higher rate than any other group in the U.S. [1]. People with DD are 7 times more likely to be a victim of sexual assault. And women with DD are 12 times as likely to be a victim of sexual assault [2,3]. Of course, this data cannot account for cases which were not reported. This means it likely happens more often than is known due to under-reporting. Only 13% of victims with disabilities receive domestic violence (DV) and/or sexual violence (SV) services [2]. Also, people with DD may have communication challenges. These challenges may make it difficult for them to share what has happened to them.

# Challenges

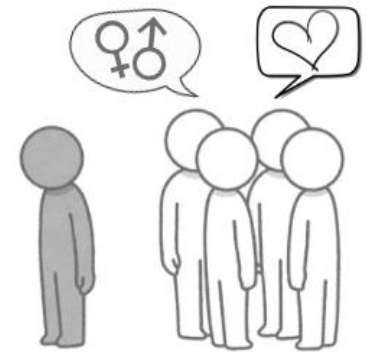
**People with DD are often excluded from education and conversations around sexuality and dating.**

People with DD have the same range of sexual orientation and interest as everyone else. Yet, there is a myth that people with DD aren't sexual. Because of this belief, people with DD face barriers to learning about sexuality and healthy relationships. For example, in schools, students with DD are often removed from classes during sex-ed lessons [5]. Abusers take advantage of this lack of understanding.



## **DD professionals are often uncomfortable with or undereducated on the topic.**

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the people that provide daily care for individuals with DD. In listening sessions across the State [6], many DSPs expressed that they do not know what types of warning signs to look for. Even when they do notice warning signs, DSPs may not know what to say or how to respond. When DSPs are aware of potential abuse, they still might not know how to support the victim. DSPs may not know what services are available to abuse victims and survivors.



## **Survivor supports and services are not always accessible.**

The facilities that offer these support services may not be physically accessible. DV and SV staff may not be comfortable or effective at working with people with DD. If a person with severe disabilities goes to a shelter to escape abuse, they will still need their typical level of support in meeting their daily needs. Shelter staff may not be able to offer that needed support. Many people with DD are dependent on staff or natural supports for transportation. If they don't want to tell these supporters about the abuse, or worse, if their abuser provides these supports, it can be very difficult to access reach these services.



# NYS CDD DV and SV Grant Work

## Sexuality and Healthy Relationship Education for People with DD

Elevatus Training, LLC was a successful applicant for a two-year, \$300,000 grant from the NYS CDD to conduct and implement trainings to help professionals, educators, self-advocates, and parents skillfully and confidently navigate the topic of sexuality.

## Building Cross-Collaboration between DV and DD providers

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (NYS OPDV) received a \$600,000 grant from the NYS CDD to increase the capacity of DD providers working with survivors/victims of domestic violence while also increasing capacity for Domestic Violence (DV) providers working with DD providers.

Over the course of this project OPDV has spoken with people with DD, their families, and providers in both fields to identify needs and solutions. A training series to help DSPs and DV provider agency staff understand and respond to violence and abuse began in the fall of 2024.



### Key Terms:

**Domestic Violence (DV):** This refers to abuse that happens in a home-setting. This may include abuse between people who are married, or against children and vulnerable adults in the home.

**Sexual Violence (SV):** This is someone forcing or manipulating another person into sexual activity without consent.



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## Works Cited:

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<https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>
  - [2] Harrell, Erika PhD, BJS Statistician. (November 2021). Nation Crime Victimization Survey. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2009-2019.  
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/crime-against-persons-disabilities-2009-2019-statistical-tables>
  - [3] Thompson, Alexandra BJS Statistician; Tapp N, Susannah, PhD, BJS Statistician. Criminal Victimization 2022. Bureau of Justice Statistics.  
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  - [4] Statistics about Sexual Violence. (2015) National Sexual Violence Resource Center.  
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  - [5] McLaughlin, K. (2023, April 5). Knowledge is power. Elevatus Training.  
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  - [6] NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) report. Summary of OPDV/CDD Collaborative Project Learning Exchanges July 2023-May 2024.
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