

All about Assault Prevention

Assault happens in the DD population

Data shows that:

- The rate of violence against people with developmental disabilities is nearly three times higher than for those without a disability
- Individuals with a cognitive (intellectual) disability have a rate of violent victimization higher than any other type of disability
- In California, over half of reported incidents of abuse (July 2014 – June 2016) were cases of physical violence



Why are individuals with developmental disabilities susceptible to abuse and assault?

Individuals with developmental disabilities are more susceptible to abuse for many reasons:

- They may have limited communication abilities and/or cognitive disabilities that make it difficult to report abuse
- They may be seen by the abuser as weak, vulnerable, or less likely to report abuse, making them easy targets

Why are individuals with developmental disabilities susceptible to abuse and assault? (Cont.)

Other reasons may include:

- They may be more likely to be abused by someone they know and trust – a caregiver or someone involved in their daily routine
- They may be easily influenced and eager to please others, thinking that the abuser is a “friend”
- They may think that how they have been treated is normal

What are the signs that may indicate that an individual is being harmed by someone?

Physical signs:

- Bruises
- Cuts
- Scrapes
- Other injuries



Behavioral signs:

- Concealing injuries
- Having a questionable explanation for injuries
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Spending a lot of money or often having little money
- Having low self-esteem
- Having sudden changes in behavior
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Using drugs
- Showing symptoms of depression and/or suicidal tendencies

Know the signs... Stop the harm

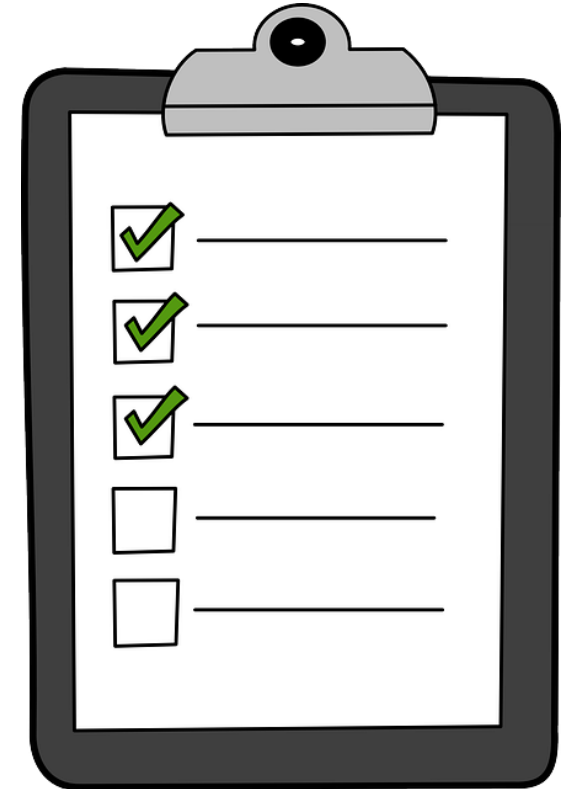
- These signs may indicate possible harm to an individual
- Any of these may be a reason for concern even if it is not related to an individual being harmed



Prevention: Prepare for violent situations with the individuals you support

Create an **assault prevention plan** with the individual you support. Examples of ideas to include in the plan are below:

- Always know where the exits are
- Never go into a room alone with someone you don't know
- Make sure you have your phone in case you need to call for help
- If you can't leave the building, lock yourself in a safe room and then call for help



Prevention: Identify and approach an individual who has experienced violence

- **Watch for the signs** that an individual is being harmed
- **Talk to the individual** one-on-one and encourage open communication if you suspect that they are being harmed
 - Often people do not report because they do not think others will believe them



Prevention: If it happens, report the incident and work to prevent it from reoccurring

- **Provide care and support for victims of violence.**
 - Often abuse goes unreported because victims fear the abuser will be able to do more harm
 - Offer your help and provide resources and solutions to the individual
- If there has been a physical or verbal attack, **make sure the person is safe**
- Look at what has happened and take necessary steps to prevent future violence

Prevention: De-escalate a potentially violent situation

Intervene in a potentially violent interaction between an individual and another person by:

- **Distracting:** Ask questions to divert attention of either the individual or other person
- **Directly approaching the situation:** Approach either the individual or other person and express your concern
 - When approaching the individual, show your support and offer your help
 - Be careful of escalating the situation when approaching the other person
- **Delegating:** If you do not know the individual or other person, ask for help from other people, such as security guards, police, other supporters, etc.

For More Information on Reporting Abuse

- Go to: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/services/dspt/year-1-2-trainer-and-student-resource-guides/>