

# Sexual Violence Against Individuals with Disabilities

**mecasa**  
MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT

## Prevalence

Slightly over 16 percent of Mainers report having at least one disability.<sup>1</sup> Individuals with disabilities experience sexual violence at a rate near epidemic proportions.

- National studies estimate that almost 80% of people with disabilities are sexually assaulted on more than one occasion and 50% of those experienced more than 10 victimizations.<sup>2</sup>
- Children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing (66.7%) or speech and language impaired (59.1%) were significantly more likely to be sexually abused than children without an identifiable disability.<sup>3</sup>
- Women with disabilities are raped and abused at a rate at least twice that of the general population of women.<sup>4</sup>
- Studies have found that anywhere between 40%-97% of sexual assaults against individuals with disabilities go unreported,<sup>5</sup> making awareness of sexual violence perpetrated against individuals with disabilities especially important.
- Among adults who are developmentally disabled, as many as 83% of the females and 32% of the males are victims of sexual assault.<sup>6</sup>

## Reporting issues

Individuals with disabilities may experience heightened difficulty in reporting sexual violence victimization. There are significant barriers, including, but not limited to, if the violence is perpetrated by a caregiver and the difficulties that encompasses, access to services, and stereotypical beliefs about the mental competency of some individuals' with disabilities capacity to understand and report sexual violence.

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## Learn more

### [Disability Rights Center](#)

Disability Rights Center (DRC) is Maine's protection and advocacy agency for people with disabilities. Their mission is to enhance and promote the equality, self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities through education, strategic advocacy and legal intervention.

### [Access Maine](#)

A website to assist Mainers with disabilities, their families, and providers. Also useful for employers, educators, researchers, and the general public.

### [Speaking Up for Us – Maine](#)

Speaking Up For Us is a statewide coalition with representatives all over the state who work to support local and statewide self-advocacy organizations to network with each other and with national organizations.

### [Alpha One](#)

Since 1978, Alpha One, a Center for Independent Living, has enabled thousands of people with disabilities to live more fully and more independently in all aspects of their lives.

## Learn more, continued

### [Crimes Against People with Disabilities](#)

This is the most current crime victimization report on individuals with disabilities by the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

### [Violence in the Lives of Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

This Special Collection offers information regarding the experiences and needs of individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing and victims/survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. The purpose of this collection is to: 1) increase knowledge and understanding of Deaf culture, 2) provide resources to assist helping professionals in direct service work with Deaf individuals, and 3) highlight best practices.

### [VAWnet: Interpersonal Violence and Women With Disabilities: A Research Update](#)

This article provides an update on what researchers have learned during the past ten years about the scope of the problem and women's responses, and offers some perspectives on the state of current research and its implications for future studies and advocacy efforts.

## Sources

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5. Petersilia, J.R. (2001). Crime victims with developmental disabilities: A review essay. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 28*(6), 655-694.
6. Johnson, I., Sigler, R. (2001). Forced sexual intercourse among intimates. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 15*(1).



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Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Line: 1-800-871-7741/TTY 1-888-458-5599