

Fact Sheet on Crime Victimization and People with Developmental Disabilities

National Crime Victims' Rights Week – April 18-24, 2010

FAIRNESS, DIGNITY, RESPECT



- Approximately 51.2 million Americans (18.1 percent of the population) live with a wide array of physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities (U.S. Census, 2002). As such, people with disabilities constitute the single largest minority group identified in the United States, surpassing the elderly (about 35 million), African American (about 36.4 million) and Hispanic (about 35.3 million) population (U.S. Census, 2000). Further, 2002 Census data reported that 32.5 million Americans (11.5 percent of the population) had a severe disability.

- In 1999, there were between 3-4.5 million persons with developmental disabilities living in the United States, or between 1.2 - 1.65% of the population (Developmental Disability Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, 2000).

- In 2007 persons age 12 or older with disabilities experienced about 716,000 nonfatal violent crimes, including rape or sexual assault (47,000), robbery (79,000), aggravated assaults (114,000) and simple assaults (476,000). They also experienced about 2.3 million property crimes during the year, (Rand, M & Harrell, E., 2009). However, this study did not include those who lived in congregate and/or other supported residential settings. A majority of adults with developmental disabilities live in supported settings.

- The high rate of violence against people with disabilities is staggering – research has found that as many as 83% of women with developmental disabilities have been sexually abused (Hard, 1986), at least 85% of women with disabilities have experienced domestic abuse (Feuerstein,

1997), and much of this abuse is chronic or severe (Sobsey, 1994).

- "People with developmental or psychiatric disabilities often have difficulty identifying when to be compliant and when to assert themselves. As a result, they may be victimized both when they comply too easily and when their refusal to comply provokes retaliation (Sobsey, 1994)."

- It is estimated that approximately 67% of perpetrators who abused individuals with severe cognitive disabilities accessed them through their work in disability services (Sobsey and Doe, 1991). Additional research suggests that 97 to 99 percent of abusers are known and trusted by the victim who has intellectual disabilities (Baladerian, 1991).

- Because people with developmental disabilities are often unable to recognize dangers, to protect themselves from those dangers, and to obtain assistance from the criminal justice system when they have been victimized, they are perceived as highly vulnerable to victimization.

Resources:

Baladarian, N. (1991). Sexual Abuse of people with developmental disabilities. *Sexuality and Disability* 9(4), 323-335.
Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, 2000. S.1809, 106th Cong. (2000).
Feuerstein, P. B. (1997). *Domestic violence and women and children with disabilities*. New York, NY: Millbank Memorial Fund.