

About ACCD and This Brochure

The Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities (ACCD) is a consumer-driven, provincial organization of persons within the cross-disability community. We actively promote the full participation of persons with disabilities within the social, economic, and political life of our communities.

We believe that all people have the right to be safe and to be protected from abuse. Recent research we've undertaken shows that women with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse.

In this brochure we want to answer questions you may have about identifying abuse and supporting women with disabilities who are being abused. We encourage you to join us as we work to end the violence.

What is Abuse?

Abuse occurs when a person in a position of power takes advantage of someone in a less powerful position. There are many types of abuse, including financial, physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional. Neglect and exploitation are also types of abuse.



Together, We Hold The Power!

How Can You Tell if Someone Is Being Abused?

Have you ever wondered if a woman with a disability whom you know or care for is being abused? Often, there are signs or “indicators” when abuse occurs. Here are some of the indicators you can look for to confirm your suspicions about abuse.

Possible signs of physical abuse

- › Unexplained or unusual injuries, such as bruises, burns, cuts, broken bones, bite marks, etc.
- › Defensive response when you ask about an injury.
- › Wary of physical contact.
- › Sleep disturbances.
- › Signs of new injuries before old injuries have healed.

Possible signs of sexual abuse

- › Stained or torn clothing and underclothing.
- › Emotional trauma.
- › A significant change in sexual behaviour or attitude.
- › Pain while walking or sitting with evasive or illogical explanations.
- › Regression to childlike behaviour.
- › Inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Possible signs of emotional abuse

- › Extreme, unusual behaviour, such as aggression, compliance, or withdrawal.
- › Constant apologies.
- › Destructive behaviour.
- › Decreased ability to cope with familiar situations.
- › High levels of anxiety, especially when asked to return to a certain place or accompany a certain person.
- › Lack of attachment to others.

Possible signs of neglect

- › Poor hygiene.
- › The same clothes worn every day.
- › Unattended medical or dental needs.
- › Underweight or overweight (when not associated with the disability).
- › Unhappy with care she is receiving, but feels unable to change situation.
- › Frequent unexplained hospitalization.

If you suspect a woman with a disability is being abused, listen to her carefully and pay attention to her behaviour. If you notice any of the possible signs listed above, she may need your assistance.

(Note: These lists do not provide *all* possible indicators.)

What Should You Do If Someone You Know Is Being Abused?

- › Listen to her story in her own words.
- › Help the individual to communicate if her disability affects her ability to communicate clearly. Be patient.
- › Don't panic or make assumptions. Take her story seriously. Accept what she tells you as the truth.
- › Get assistance as soon as possible. If there has been a sexual or physical attack, she should be examined and treated for her injuries as soon as possible.
- › Find and explain options about reporting abuse. (See contact list on back panel.) Respect her right to make decisions about the options that are available.
- › If the individual is in danger, assist her in getting to a safe place.
- › If you are a paid care provider, follow your organization's protocols on abuse reporting.



For More Information

ACCD

707, 10339 – 124 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 3W1
Phone: 1-800-387-2514
TTY: (780) 488-9090
Web Site: www.accd.net
e-mail: accd@accd.net

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

2-12739 Fort Road NW
Edmonton, AB T5A 1A7
Phone: (780) 456-7000
e-mail: voice@acws.ca

Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary

7 – 11 Street NE
Calgary, AB T2E 4Z2
Phone: (403) 263-6880
TTY: (403) 263-6874

Independent Living Society

205, 10006 – 101 Avenue
Grande Prairie, AB T8V 0X9
Phone: (780) 539-0433

Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Provincial Board
4th Floor 10011 - 109 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8
Phone: (780) 427-1177 or toll free 310-0000

Your Community Police or RCMP Office Numbers are listed on the Inside Cover of Your Phone Book

If the organizations listed here are not in your community, they will be able to refer you to a local contact.

This brochure is developed with information received from Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Alberta Provincial Board and on the booklet "Responding to the Abuse" produced by Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped.

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Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

Violence Against Women with Disabilities: Is Someone You Know Being Abused?

