

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.

We would like to share our findings with you and 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!

Why Are Women with Disabilities More Vulnerable to Abuse?

The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) suggests that women with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse because society's perceptions of them are clouded by myths and stereotypes.

Take a minute to examine your own perceptions of women with disabilities. Have you ever thought or been taught that women with disabilities

- › Are like children?
- › Are not sexual?
- › Need you to make decisions for them?
- › Are helpless and need your pity?
- › Do not contribute to society?
- › Are overly sexual?
- › Need special treatment?

Unfortunately, such myths affect the ways that many of us care for and interact with women with disabilities. These perceptions make women with disabilities more vulnerable to violence.



The Client/Caregiver Relationship

ACCD believes that, for the most part, caregivers choose their profession because they genuinely care for people. However, the nature of the relationship between caregivers and the people they support creates a power imbalance. If caregivers do not receive proper training, they may unintentionally misuse their power and take advantage of the women they are caring for.

What Caregivers Can Do

- › Remember that women with disabilities know their disability best.
- › Respect what your clients tell you.
- › Examine your own perceptions regarding women with disabilities.
- › Educate yourself about the realities, not the myths that shape the lives of women with disabilities.
- › Remember that the women you care for are unique, contributing members of society.
- › Support women with disabilities in achieving independence.

What Training Organizations Can Do

- › Ensure that your training addresses the myths and stereotypes faced by women with disabilities.
- › Invite women with disabilities to speak to your students about their personal experiences with the care system. This *consumer-directed approach* to training will provide your students with valuable insights concerning this most vital profession.

What Home Care Agencies Can Do

- › Provide professional development for your care providers that addresses the myths and stereotypes faced by women with disabilities.
- › Invite women with disabilities to speak to your care providers about their personal experiences with the care system.
- › Review your agency's abuse reporting and investigation protocols. Include a consumer perspective in your review.

What ACCD Can Do For You

- › Put you in touch with an organization in your area.
- › Provide you with information from our library.
- › Arrange to have a woman with a disability meet with you and your colleagues to share insights about this serious issue.

For More Information

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ACCD has other brochures in this series that you may be interested in. You can call our office or visit our web site to access these brochures.

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Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

Violence Against Women with Disabilities: What Paid Caregivers Need To Know

