

NAVIGATING SEXUAL ABUSE



A Manual for Family Advocates of People with
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



THE NATALIE PROJECT
(#ustoo)

www.thenatalieproject.org



@TheNatalieProject

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Responding to Abuse	3
1.0 Know that Abuse Can Happen	4
1.1 Reflection	5
2.0 Learn the Signs of Abuse	6
2.1 Reflection	7
3.0 Honor Your Feelings and Take Action	8
3.1 Reflection	9
4.0 Contact Responding Agencies	10
4.1 Who in Your Community Supports Survivors?	11
5.0 Rape Crisis Centers	13
5.1 Reflection	14
6.0 Remove Your Loved One from Danger	15
6.1 Reflection	16
7.0 Know Your Rights	19
7.1 Reflection	22
8.0 Document Everything and File	23
8.1 Reflection	28
9.0 Obtain a Police Report	29
9.1 Reflection	31
10.0 Heal	34
10.1 Reflection	36
Support Worker Background Guidance	38
Background Search Worksheet	41
Summary of Plan	44
Your To Do List	46
Closing	47
References, Resources, & Links	48-49

FOREWORD

The Natalie Project provides this manual to educate and empower family advocates in preventing and reducing the risk of sexual abuse against their loved ones and supporting survivors on their path to justice and healing. It's crucial to know you're not alone. Learning about this issue and documenting experiences are vital for your entire family's healing process.

I'm Julie Payne-Neward. In 2012, I discovered that my sister Natalie, who has intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), was sexually abused at a publicly funded daytime program.

Natalie does not speak or use communication devices. So we only knew something was wrong by observing changes in her behavior and health. Natalie experienced symptoms and displayed signs of abuse for nearly six months. But it wasn't until a visiting medical professional at an urgent care facility finally administered a test for a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that we fully understood the trauma Natalie had endured.

My family, especially my mother and I, felt helpless and lost, unsure of where to turn for help. The system mishandled the crime. No mandated report was ever filed, despite this being required by law. And we never received any additional support or trauma services.

We suffered deeply and want to help you avoid the same.

Disclaimer: This manual is not a substitute for legal or medical advice.

WELCOME

In the United States, over 8 million people have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD)¹. More than 80% of them live with family members: parents, siblings "Sibs", grandparents, etc². The support community exceeds 11 million people.

We need to address a critical issue.

People with IDD face the highest sexual abuse rates of any minority group in the U.S. Tragically, they also experience the lowest reporting rates and receive minimal systemic support.

Research shows that over 80% of people with IDD will experience sexual abuse, often multiple times, in their lifetime. Their risk is seven times higher than those without disabilities³.

This is a public health crisis.

The Natalie Project is committed to empowering families with knowledge.

Our goal is to help family advocates:

- 1 Understand the epidemic of sexual abuse amongst people with IDD
- 2 Recognize the signs of sexual abuse
- 3 Know the path to healing and justice
- 4 Take collective action for change

We Can Do Better

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

This manual draws from Dr. Nora Baladerian's publication, "A Risk Reduction Workbook for Parents and Service Providers: Practices to Reduce the Risk of Abuse, Including Sexual Violence, Against People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2013."⁴ We are deeply grateful for Dr. Baladerian's work.

1 <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/risp/data-bytes/prevalence-of-idd-in-the-us#:~:text=Key%20Finding,on%20state%20IDD%20agency%20caseloads.>

2 <https://www.disabilitycoop.com/2024/01/22/caregiving-pressure-mount-for-families-of-those-with-idd/30703/>

3 <https://www.npr.org/series/575502633/abused-and-betrayed>

4 <https://norabaladerian.com/guidebooks/>

RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Here are the essential steps to take when abuse is suspected. This manual will further explain each step.

- 1 Know that abuse can happen.
- 2 Learn the signs of abuse.
- 3 Honor your feelings and take action.
- 4 Contact appropriate responding agencies.
- 5 Reach out to your local rape crisis center.
- 6 Remove your loved one from danger.
- 7 Know your rights.
- 8 Document everything and file.
- 9 Obtain a police report.
- 10 Focus on healing.

A Guide on Responding to Suspected Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities. Ten Tips for Parents or Family Members whose Loved One Receives School, Residential, Transportation, Day Program, Vocational, or Other Direct or Support Services By Nora Baladerian, Ph.D.⁵

5 <https://norabaladerian.com/2020/07/05/a-guide-on-responding-to-suspected-abuse-of-people-with-developmental-disabilities-by-dr-baladerian/>

1.0 KNOW THAT ABUSE CAN HAPPEN

People with IDD are left vulnerable in a system⁶ that is often more focused on its own structure than on the needs of the individual and their family. This is why self-advocacy and family advocacy are crucial, especially when it comes to addressing sexual abuse.

REASONS FOR THE HIGH RATES OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN THIS COMMUNITY INCLUDE:

People are unaware of the following:

- 1 The epidemic of sexual abuse
- 2 The signs of sexual abuse
- 3 How to respond to sexual abuse
- 4 The path to justice and healing

People with disabilities live in a world that⁷ :

- 1 Views them as childlike and incapable of engaging in consensual sexual activity
- 2 Isolates them from peers and discussions about sexual and romantic relationships
- 3 Relies heavily on professional and family support for day-to-day needs
- 4 Promotes a culture of compliance, making it harder for individuals to assert boundaries

“We have lived through your greatest nightmare. We demand our leaders address this issue so we can achieve justice and healing.”

– Julie Payne-Neward

⁶ <https://disabilityjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/Fitzsimons-Justice-for-Crimes-Victims-with-Disabilities.pdf>
⁷ <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1073&context=jcssw>

1.1 REFLECTION

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Do you believe that people with disabilities can be abused?
- 2 Do you think the rate of abuse is higher among people with disabilities than the general public?
- 3 Can people with disabilities have consensual sexual relationships but also be vulnerable to abuse?
- 4 Do you believe people with disabilities can experience trauma, even if they can't vocalize it? If so, how do they do it?
- 5 Is your loved one with disabilities at risk for abuse?
- 6 Have you had discussions about abuse with family members or support professionals?
- 7 Has anyone in the disability service system informed you about the risk of abuse and the preventative practices and policies in place?
- 8 Do you know anyone in the disability community who is a survivor of abuse?
- 9 Have you ever read news stories about abuse involving individuals with disabilities?

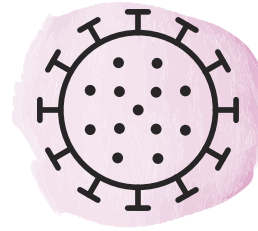
2.0 LEARN THE SIGNS OF ABUSE



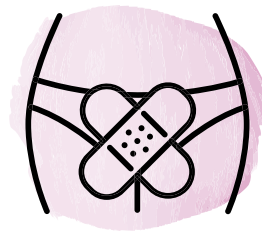
Direct Disclosure



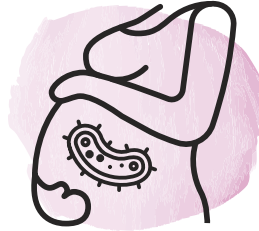
Clothes Out of Place



Pain / Infection



Injury to Private Areas



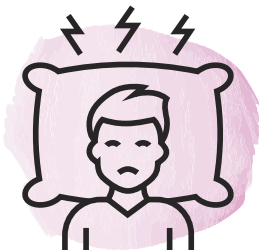
Disease or Pregnancy



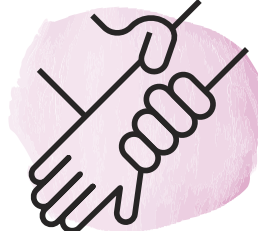
Frequent Illness



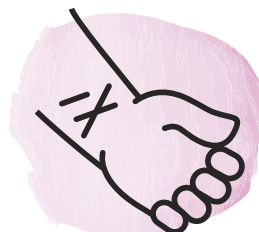
Intense Fear Response



Sleep Problems



Signs of Forced Restraint



Self-Destructive Behavior

Disclaimer: These signs may indicate abuse, but could also suggest other health concerns. Always consult a medical professional for advice.

2.1 REFLECTION

An advocate's role is to understand how communication is best facilitated, whether verbally or non-verbally. This includes using augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) devices to express discomfort, distress, or abuse.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- 1** Has your loved one communicated that someone hurt them? If so, how did they communicate it?
- 2** How do you know when they feel happy, sad, angry, or unwell?
- 3** How do they express pleasure and pain?
- 4** Have there been any sudden changes in their behavior? What were those changes?
- 5** Do you have answers to the above questions written anywhere?

3.0 HONOR YOUR FEELINGS AND TAKE ACTION

Learning that someone you love may have been abused is overwhelming. It's natural to feel shock, anger, fear, and even guilt.

But remember: perpetrators count on victims and their families being too distressed to pursue justice.

Secrecy is the perpetrator's defense, and abuse survivors often feel an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. It's crucial to act, despite the emotional burden.

Survivor advocate Christy Heiskala explains, "It's better to burden the suspected perpetrator, who can defend themselves, than ignore the one who has disclosed abuse."

We must fight back, honor the survivor's pain, and demand justice.

"It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering..."

In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim. If he cannot silence her absolutely, he tries to make sure that no one listens. To this end, he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization. After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies: it never happened, the victim lies, the victim exaggerates, the victim brought it upon herself; and in any case it is time to forget the past and move on.

The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail."

— Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*

3.1 REFLECTION

Imagine realizing that your loved one, who relies on others for support, has been harmed by someone entrusted with their care.

Recently, you've noticed troubling changes in their behavior - they've begun attempting to kiss others without consent, something they've never done before. How would you feel at that moment?

QUESTIONS:

- 1 What emotions arise upon realizing this about them?
- 2 How do you initially respond when you hear this information?
- 3 Do you feel the need to confront the leadership or the suspect responsible for the harm?
- 4 Do you consider contacting law enforcement, and how does that decision feel for you?
- 5 Can you manage the situation effectively while also ensuring their well-being?
- 6 What steps do you take to support your family members during this crisis?
- 7 How do you let your loved one know this isn't their fault?
- 8 How do you help them regain their power and control?
- 9 In what ways can you include the survivor in the decision making process?
- 10 How do you practice self-care while balancing the demands of caring for them during this challenging time?

4.0 CONTACT RESPONDING AGENCIES

Sexual abuse is a serious crime. Reaching out to support services is a crucial step toward both justice and healing.

Your story is powerful. Advocate!

AGENCIES & THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES (IN ORDER OF INVOLVEMENT)

- 1** Forensic Nurse / Emergency Room – Conducts medical evaluations, collects forensic evidence, and provides immediate care for victims of sexual abuse. May also offer STI prevention and crisis intervention.
- 2** Law Enforcement – Investigates the crime, interviews the victim, collects evidence, and determines whether a crime has occurred.
- 3** Dependent Adult Liaison – A member of the police department who addresses abuse and neglect of dependent adults, working alongside law enforcement to ensure proper handling of the case.
- 4** Adult Protective Services (APS) – Investigates reports of abuse involving elders and dependent adults who live in private homes, apartments, hospitals, or are experiencing homelessness.
- 5** Community Licensing – Ensures the health, safety, and quality of life for individuals in community care by enforcing regulations and investigating facility-related concerns.
- 6** Long-Term Care Ombudsman – Advocates for individuals in long-term care facilities (such as nursing homes or assisted living), working to resolve issues related to health, safety, and rights.
- 7** District Attorney – Reviews the evidence collected by law enforcement and determines whether to prosecute the crime.

4.1 WHO IN YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORTS SURVIVORS?

Please complete the following.

1 **Developmental Disability Support Agencies**

Agency's Name: _____

Case Worker's Name: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Executive Director: _____

Agency's Name: _____

Case Worker's Name: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Executive Director: _____

Agency's Name: _____

Case Worker's Name: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Executive Director: _____

2 **Emergency Room** | Hospital

Hospital Name: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____

3 **Police Department** | Law Enforcement

Name of Police Department: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____

4 **Dependent Adult Liaison** | Police Department

Name of Liaison: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____



5 Adult Protective Services

Name of Agency: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____



6 Community Licensing

Name of Agency: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____



7 Long Term Care Ombudsman

Name of Ombudsman: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____



8 District Attorney's Office

Name of District Attorney: _____

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____

5.0 RAPE CRISIS CENTERS

Sexual abuse is a crime, and it is important to contact law enforcement for justice. A local rape crisis center can help guide you through the healing process.

THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Rape Crisis Centers

Rape crisis centers provide mental health support, crisis hotlines, support groups, counseling, legal aid, and accompaniment for survivors to medical exams or law enforcement interactions. Mental health support often includes trauma-informed approaches that help survivors process what happened, manage triggers, and develop coping strategies. Crisis hotlines are available 24/7 and staffed by trained advocates who can provide immediate emotional support, safety planning, and referrals to local resources. Support groups offer safe, facilitated spaces where survivors can share experiences, reduce isolation, and connect with others who have faced similar situations. Counseling provides one-on-one sessions with licensed mental health professionals to address trauma, anxiety, depression, and long-term recovery needs. It is important to note that while centers are responsible for having legal advocates, they are not required to provide legal aid. Legal aid typically means licensed attorneys are available to offer legal advice and represent survivors in legal proceedings. Legal advocates, on the other hand, can assist survivors by helping complete Personal Protection Order (PPO) requests, explaining the court process, and accompanying them in the courtroom for emotional support—but they cannot provide legal advice.

Family Justice Centers

These centers provide multidisciplinary, co-located services for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, elder or dependent adult abuse, and human trafficking. They aim to reduce the number of times victims need to share their stories and increase access to services.

ValorUS:

ValorUS® (VALOR) is a California-based, national organization and California's sexual abuse coalition committed to advancing equity and ending sexual violence. VALOR builds dynamic relationships across a diverse range of communities, institutions and systems, and mobilizes a network of survivors and advocates to influence change. Through leadership, prevention, and advocacy, VALOR is fearlessly pursuing a world free from violence where the dignity of every person is valued and respected.

5.1 REFLECTION

Who supports survivors' healing?

Please complete the following.



1 Local Rape Crisis Center

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____

To Do

- Research what services they offer



2 Family Justice Center

Website: _____

Phone Number: _____

To Do

- Research what services they offer

6.0 REMOVE YOUR LOVED ONE FROM DANGER

When you learn that your loved one has experienced harm or abuse, the first step is ensuring they are no longer in a situation where they may be further affected. This may involve removing them from the environment where the incident occurred, such as a day program or any other setting where they may be at risk.

It's crucial to stay calm and approach the situation carefully. Your first instinct may be to react emotionally, but taking deliberate steps to ensure your loved one's safety is the top priority.

If the abuse occurred in a structured setting, such as a day program, avoid making a scene or alerting potential perpetrators.

Instead, discreetly contact the program coordinator, supervisor, or management to have them removed from the environment **without raising suspicion**. This lowers the chance of a cover-up or evidence being destroyed. Ensure your loved one is relocated to a safe, supportive place—whether at home, with a trusted family member, or another secure setting—where they can receive the care and protection they need.

Continue to offer emotional support while doing this. Reassure them that they are now in a safe place and that you are there to help them through this difficult time. Pay attention to their feelings and validate their experience, offering comfort without overwhelming them with too many details or questions.

Once they are in a secure setting, consider reaching out to professionals who can support both their emotional and physical well-being, such as a counselor, social worker, or trusted healthcare provider. Before contacting these professionals or authorities, we suggest documenting everything you know for sure (facts, not assumptions) in chronological order, including dates, times, names, witnesses, contact information, and any other relevant details. Keep it brief and focused. If necessary, review the steps you'll take to prevent further exposure to the situation, such as reporting the incident to the appropriate authorities or seeking additional services for their ongoing care. For more details on documenting and reporting, see the section below.

The goal is to make sure they feel safe and supported as you address the situation, ensuring they are no longer in an environment where they could be at risk of further harm. From here, you can work together to decide what additional actions to take, always keeping their well-being and security as your guiding priorities.

6.1 REFLECTION

REMOVING YOUR LOVED ONE FROM DANGER

This worksheet helps guide you through the process of reestablishing safety after learning about harm or abuse. The goal is to take thoughtful, effective action to protect them and begin addressing the situation in a safe and supportive way.

As with all of your support, this process should be as collaborative as possible. Abuse takes power and control away from survivors. You want to avoid retraumatizing your loved one by making decisions without their input. You want to help the survivor weigh options, and get their opinion on any decisions being made. We recognize that some survivors may require additional support. Please do your best to adapt the guidance in this manual to meet those needs.

Change can be very difficult for survivors with disabilities, even when “positive”.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE SIGNS AND TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

Determine where the harm may have occurred. Was it at a day program, school, care facility, or another setting?

- Recognize the warning signs: What physical, emotional, or behavioral changes indicate possible harm? (e.g., unexplained injuries, emotional distress, sudden behavioral shifts)
- Document your observations: What specific symptoms or concerning behaviors have you noticed?

Notes:

STEP 2: ROLE-PLAY ► REMOVE YOUR LOVED ONE FROM THE SITUATION

- Practice confidently calling the program or facility to request the removal of your loved one from the place where harm may have occurred. **Be prepared to be as neutral and calm as possible.**
- Then, contact the program, facility, or environment where the incident occurred and request their immediate removal. Service providers may require a specific reason for removal, so consider how much information you want to share while prioritizing your loved one's safety and not risking suspicion.
- If necessary, arrange for alternative care or a safe space for them (e.g., home, with a trusted relative, etc.)

SCRIPT PREPARATION:

Use the space below to draft what you want to say when contacting the program or facility. This can help you stay focused and clear during the conversation.

Example: *"Hello, this is [Your Name]. I am calling regarding [Loved One's Name]. Due to a change in our family's schedule, I need to pick them up on [Date and Time]. Please let me know the next steps."*

Your script:

Where will they be safest after leaving the situation?

STEP 3: PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Reassure your loved one that you believe them, they are safe now, and that you are there to protect them. Remind them that they didn't do anything wrong and can come to you if anything like this happens again.
- Allow them to express their feelings, but don't pressure them for details right away. Let them know they can share when they feel ready.

What will you say and do to offer reassurance and emotional comfort to them?

STEP 4: PLAN NEXT STEPS

- Once they are safe, consider reaching out to professionals (e.g., counselor, social worker, medical provider) for emotional support or any necessary evaluations.
- Determine whether reporting the incident to authorities or other appropriate organizations is necessary.

What resources or support will you seek for their ongoing care and safety?

STEP 5: REVIEW AND REFLECT ON ACTIONS TAKEN

- Review the steps you have taken to ensure their safety.
- Reflect on how you handled the situation and whether any additional measures are needed to prevent future harm.

What are the key takeaways from this experience? How will you use this information to ensure their continued safety and well-being?

7.0 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you are supporting a survivor, it is crucial to understand their legal and personal rights. Survivors of rape and sexual abuse are entitled to a range of protections and services supporting their healing, safety, and pursuit of justice. Being informed about these rights helps ensure they have the resources and advocacy they need in the aftermath of such a traumatic experience.

1 Right to Safety

The first and foremost right of any survivor is the right to safety. They have the right to take steps to protect themselves from the perpetrator. If they feel at risk, contact local law enforcement or a crisis center to discuss protective orders or relocation options.

2 Right to Privacy

Survivors of sexual abuse have the right to privacy and dignity during the reporting process, which includes:

- Confidentiality with healthcare providers, counselors, family justice centers, and law enforcement.
- Limits on information sharing to protect sensitive details about the abuse.
- The right to request anonymity during the investigation to keep their identity private.

To further protect privacy ask each professional about what is confidential and who will have access to the information.

For example:

- Information shared during a forensic exam will be provided to law enforcement.
- Advocates from the police or district attorney's office will relay information to their teams, which may later be accessed by the defense counsel.

The accused has the right to know who is making the accusation, so anonymity is not always guaranteed.

Ensure the survivor's privacy is respected by communicating directly with professionals handling the case.

3 Right to Report the Crime

Survivors have the right to report the abuse to law enforcement, but this isn't mandatory. Pursuing criminal charges is a personal choice.

However, if they decide to report:

- Survivors have the right to a compassionate, trauma-informed response from law enforcement and legal professionals.
- Police officers should treat survivors with dignity and respect and inform them of their legal options.
- Survivors can request to have a support person or advocate present during interviews and interactions with law enforcement.

Discuss with the survivor whether they feel ready to report the abuse, and guide them through the decision-making process. If they choose to report, help ensure they are supported throughout the process.

4 Right to Medical Care

Survivors have the right to immediate and comprehensive medical care, including:

- Emergency room visits and access to rape kits (forensic exams) to collect evidence in the event of a criminal investigation.
- Treatment for injuries sustained during the abuse.
- Testing and preventive care for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy.
- Ongoing healthcare services, including mental health care, counseling, and therapy for emotional healing.

Accompany them to the hospital or healthcare facility to ensure they receive the care and support they need. Offer them choices regarding testing and treatment options.

5 Right to Legal Assistance

Survivors have the right to legal aid throughout the criminal justice process:

- Legal representation in both criminal and civil cases, including potential lawsuits for damages.
- Assistance in navigating the legal system, including understanding the process of pressing charges, seeking a protective order, or pursuing restitution for the harm they've endured.
- Access to advocacy services to help guide the survivor through legal processes, from initial reports to trial.

Help them find an attorney or legal advocate, especially if they decide to pursue criminal charges or civil action. Many rape crisis centers offer legal assistance or can direct you to legal resources.

6 Right to Support and Advocacy

Survivors of sexual abuse have the right to emotional support and assistance from family, friends, and professional advocates.

- Access to rape crisis centers for crisis counseling, support groups, and long-term therapy.
- Assistance from victim advocates who help survivors navigate the legal, medical, and emotional challenges following the abuse.
- Applying for community services that may assist like financial assistance, shelters, and food stamps.

Encourage them to connect with a rape crisis center or advocate to receive emotional support and guidance. This can be crucial in helping them navigate the aftermath of the abuse and their next steps.

7 Right to Victim Compensation

Survivors may be eligible for financial compensation through state or federal victim compensation programs. These programs typically cover:

- Counseling and therapy for the survivor.
- Medical expenses including testing, treatment, and prescription medications.
- Lost wages due to time off work for medical or legal appointments.
- Relocation costs if moving to a safer location.

Help them explore victim compensation options and assist in the application process if needed. These programs can help alleviate some of the financial burden caused by the crime.

Next Steps:

- Familiarize yourself with local laws and resources available to survivors.
- Support them in exercising their rights, whether they choose to report the abuse or seek help.
- Reach out to a rape crisis center for additional resources and advocacy.

7.1 REFLECTION

SUMMARY OF RIGHTS OF SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

Right	Description
Right to Safety	Survivors have the right to protect themselves from the perpetrator, including seeking protective orders or relocation assistance.
Right to Privacy	Survivors are entitled to confidentiality from healthcare providers, counselors, and law enforcement, with limits on information sharing.
Right to Report the Crime	Reporting the crime is optional, and survivors have the right to a trauma-informed response and to have a support person present.
Right to Medical Care	Access to immediate and ongoing medical care, including forensic exams, STI treatment, and mental health support.
Right to Legal Assistance	Survivors can access legal representation for both criminal and civil matters, including protective orders and restitution.
Right to Support and Advocacy	Survivors have the right to receive emotional support from family, friends, and professional advocates through rape crisis centers.
Right to Victim Compensation	Survivors may qualify for financial compensation for medical costs, counseling, lost wages, and relocation expenses.

Visit www.Rise.org to learn more about Survivor's Rights by state:

<https://risenow.us/impact/>

Reflection Questions:

What did you learn about your rights?

Which of these rights do you think are the most important?

8.0 DOCUMENT EVERYTHING AND FILE

When abuse occurs at a program serving people with disabilities, the agency is typically required to document the incident through specific reporting mechanisms.

These reports can vary by state and agency, but there are common practices for documenting incidents of abuse or neglect in programs that serve individuals with disabilities.

Below are the types of reports and documentation typically used:

1 Observation Report

An internal report used by the agency to document any unusual or concerning events, including allegations of abuse.

What it includes:

- Date and time of the incident.
- Description of the incident, including who was involved.
- Any immediate actions taken (e.g., medical treatment, removal from the situation).
- The names of witnesses, if any.
- A description of the physical, emotional, or psychological signs observed.
- The incident report helps the agency track and review incidents. It's often used as a preliminary step before further investigation.

2 Abuse or Neglect Report | Incident Report

A detailed report used in cases of alleged abuse or neglect, often required by law or regulation.

What it includes:

- Detailed description of the abuse or neglect (what happened, who was involved).
- Information about the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses.
- Medical or psychological reports, if applicable.
- Any steps the program has taken to ensure the individual's safety.

The Abuse or Neglect Report is primarily for protecting the victim through external intervention.

This type of report is submitted to local authorities, such as Adult Protective

Services (APS) or Child Protective Services (CPS), ombudsperson, or law enforcement.

3 State or Regulatory Agency Reports

These are official reports submitted to the state's Department of Developmental Services or a similar state agency overseeing programs serving people with disabilities.

What it includes:

- The nature of the abuse or neglect.
- Information about how the agency responded to the allegation.
- The agency's internal investigation findings.
- Any corrective actions taken (e.g., staff reassignment, retraining, policy changes).

These reports ensure that the agency is in compliance with state regulations and provides oversight for further investigation or intervention.

4 Law Enforcement or Police Report

If the abuse involves criminal activity, such as physical abuse or sexual abuse, the agency will likely need to file a police report.

What it includes:

- Specific details of the criminal act (date, time, location).
- Names of individuals involved, including the survivor and alleged perpetrator.
- Any medical records or evidence that supports the claim of abuse.

This report initiates a criminal investigation by law enforcement.

5 Internal Investigation Report

If the program has its own investigation team or procedures for investigating allegations, they will produce an internal report.

What it includes:

- A detailed summary of the investigation process, including interviews with staff, the individual involved, and any witnesses.
- Any findings about the credibility of the allegation.
- Recommendations for actions to improve safety or prevent future abuse.

This report is used to assess the agency's responsibility in handling the situation and can be used for internal accountability and further training.

6 Person-Centered Plan

If the abuse survivor has a person-centered plan (PCP) or individualized service plan (ISP), this may need to be updated to reflect changes in the individual's support needs or safety concerns.

What it includes:

- Adjustments to the care plan, including any changes to where or how services are provided.
- Consideration for additional safeguards to prevent further abuse.

This ensures that the survivor's ongoing needs are met and that there is a plan in place for their continued safety and well-being.

7 Reporting to the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA)

If the abuse involves systemic issues or there is a concern about the agency's handling of the case, a report might need to be made to a state or national advocacy organization, such as the Office of Protection and Advocacy.

What it includes:

- Details of the abuse incident and how the agency responded.
- Concerns about the care provided by the program or facility.

These reports help protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and ensure that the facility or program is held accountable.

8 Copy of the Medical Record

When abuse occurs at a program serving individuals with disabilities, the medical records related to the survivor's care are crucial for documenting injuries, providing evidence, and supporting the survivor's case. Obtaining a copy of the medical record serves both as documentation of the immediate response to the abuse and as a record of the survivor's physical and emotional state.

What it includes:

- Details of injuries: The medical record should document any physical injuries sustained during the abuse, including a description of the injuries, their severity, and any medical treatment provided.
- Forensic examination: If the survivor underwent a forensic exam (rape kit), the medical record will contain findings related to the examination, including evidence of sexual abuse or other forms of abuse.

- Psychological evaluation: Documentation of any emotional or psychological effects of the abuse, including any counseling or therapy provided, and a plan for ongoing mental health support.
- Medical history: The survivor's medical background, which can help medical professionals better understand their care needs and responses.

Purpose of the Medical Record:

- Evidence in an investigation: The medical record serves as evidence that may be used in criminal investigations, legal proceedings, or civil actions related to the abuse. It provides documented proof of the survivor's physical and emotional condition, which can support their claims.
- Tracking ongoing care: The medical record allows healthcare providers to track ongoing care and ensure the survivor is receiving the appropriate follow-up treatment for their injuries and psychological needs.
- Ensuring continuity of care: The survivor's care plan can be informed by the medical records, ensuring that all medical and psychological needs are addressed during their recovery.

Request the medical records:

It is important for the survivor or their legal guardian to request a copy of the medical records as soon as possible after the abuse. This ensures that the information is documented properly and is available if law enforcement, legal professionals, or healthcare providers need it for further action. Keep the medical records confidential and store them in a safe place, as they may contain sensitive personal and health information. Consider providing a copy to the survivor's legal team or advocate if needed.

COMPARISON OF REPORT TYPES

Feature	Observation Report	Abuse or Neglect Report or Incident Report	State or Regulatory Agency Report	Law Enforcement or Police Report	Internal Investigation Report	Person-Centered Plan (Updated)	Reporting to the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA)	Copy of the Medical Record
Purpose	Internal tracking of unusual events	External reporting of abuse/neglect allegations	Ensure compliance with state regulations and oversight	Initiates a criminal investigation for acts like sexual abuse	Internal assessment and accountability	Update care plans to reflect new safety needs	Ensure independent oversight and advocate for systemic change	Provide evidence of physical or psychological harm
Recipients	Kept within the agency	External authorities (APS, CPS, police)	State regulatory agencies (e.g. Department of Developmental Services)	Local law enforcement (e.g. police, sheriff)	Agency leadership and legal teams	Care team, case managers, and relevant service providers	State or national protection and advocacy organizations	Survivor, legal representatives, and investigative authorities
Trigger for Use	Any unusual event (e.g. injuries, behaviors)	Reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect	Incidents requiring regulatory reviews or policy violations	Criminal activity, such as sexual abuse by a staff member	Allegations of abuse requiring internal investigation	Changes needed in care due to safety concerns	Concerns about the agency's response or broader systemic failures	Evidence required to document and support allegations of abuse
Outcome	Internal review; may lead to external reporting	Independent investigation and possible legal action	Regulatory oversight, possible corrective actions, and policy compliance	Potential criminal charges, prosecution, and legal outcomes	Findings guide internal policy changes, disciplinary actions, or training	Update service plans to ensure the survivor's safety and well-being	Advocacy intervention and policy recommendations to prevent recurrence	Support legal and medical follow-up care for the survivor
Examples	Documenting a staff member being alone with a resident in an unsupervised area	Reporting an allegation that a staff member sexually abused a resident	Reporting that the agency failed to remove or discipline an employee accused of sexual abuse	Filing a police report after a staff member sexually abuses a resident	Conducting interviews and reviewing evidence about the alleged sexual abuse	Updating the service plan to restrict unsupervised access to specific staff	Reporting the agency's failure to act on repeated abuse allegations	Documenting injuries from a forensic exam following sexual abuse

8.1 REFLECTION

GATHER A COPY OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

- 1** Internal incident report with the agency.
- 2** Law enforcement's report.
- 3** Report to state/regulatory agencies that oversee disability programs.
- 4** Report for formal abuse or neglect with Adult Protective Services (APS) or Child Protective Services (CPS), as required.
- 5** Updated care plan to address safety concerns and new needs.
- 6** Medical records.
- 7** Written follow-up on the actions taken by the agency and ensure appropriate outcomes. Document who you speak with and when. Noting name, title and department, if applicable.
- 8** Save all correspondence, emails, letters, voicemails, etc.

9.0 OBTAIN A POLICE REPORT

Obtaining a police report involves a specific process that may vary by jurisdiction, but here is a general guide on how to acquire a police report:

1 Identify the Right Police Department

- Find the jurisdiction: You need to know which police department handled the case. This is usually the department in the area **where the incident occurred**.
- Case number: If you know the case number associated with the incident, it will make the process easier.

2 Gather Necessary Information

When requesting the report, be prepared with the following:

- Date and time of the incident: Be specific about when the event happened.
- Location of the incident: Include the address or area where the crime occurred.
- Names of involved individuals: Provide the name of the victim, suspect, or anyone else relevant to the case.
- Your relationship to the case: If you're requesting the report on behalf of the survivor, you may need to prove your relationship (e.g., parent, legal guardian, or authorized representative).

3 Determine the Method for Requesting the Report

- In Person: Visit the police department's records division or public records office. You may need to fill out a request form.
- By Phone: Some police departments allow you to request a copy of the report over the phone. You may still need to provide details such as the case number and your identification.
- Online: Many police departments have online portals where you can request police reports. You may need to create an account or provide a valid email address to receive the report.
- By Mail: Some jurisdictions allow requests to be sent by mail. You may need to fill out a form and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope, along with payment for any fees.

4 Requesting the Report

- Make your request: Contact the police department via the method available to you. If making the request in person or by phone, be sure to ask if you need any specific documents (e.g., identification, proof of guardianship).

- Pay any associated fees: There may be a small fee for obtaining a police report, depending on the department. This fee typically covers administrative costs.



Wait for Processing

- Processing time: Depending on the department and the case's complexity, it may take several days or weeks to process your request. Be patient and ask for an estimated time for when the report will be available.
- Follow-up: If you haven't received the report within the estimated timeframe, follow up with the police department to check on the status of your request.



Review the Report

- Once you receive the police report, review it carefully. It may contain sensitive or private information, so be sure to handle it with care. If you need help understanding the report or have questions about the contents, you can reach out to a victim advocate or attorney for guidance.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Confidentiality and Access: In some cases, police reports (especially those related to ongoing investigations or sensitive cases) may be confidential or have certain details redacted. This means not all information may be accessible.
- Third-Party Requests: If you're not the victim, but are a legal guardian, advocate, or representative, you may need to provide additional documentation (like proof of guardianship) to receive the report.

By following these steps, you can request and obtain a copy of a police report to understand the details of the case and track the investigation's progress.

9.1 REFLECTION

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE POLICE REPORT

The police report contains details of the incident and the actions taken during the investigation. Here are some key sections to look for:

Basic Information

- ✓ Date, Time, and Location: The report will state when and where the incident occurred.
- ✓ Involved Persons: The report lists all individuals involved, including the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses (if any).

Description of the Incident

- ✓ This section includes details of what happened, including the victim's statement (if available) and descriptions of the abuse.
- ✓ Important Tip: The victim's account may be quoted or summarized in the report.

Evidence Collected

- ✓ The report will describe any evidence gathered, such as forensic evidence, medical records, or physical evidence (e.g., clothing).
- ✓ Important Tip: This section may include the findings of the forensic exam or rape kit.

Witness Statements

- ✓ If there were witnesses, their statements may be included in the report. This could help clarify the events.

Investigation Progress

- ✓ This section outlines what actions the police have taken, such as interviews, evidence analysis, or steps in the criminal investigation.
- ✓ Important Tip: Not all investigations may be complete at the time of your request, so some information may still be pending.

HOW TO READ THE REPORT

Look for Important Names

- ✓ Make sure the names of all involved are correct: the victim, suspect(s), and any witnesses.
- ✓ Check if the police have identified the suspect or if they are still investigating.

Pay Attention to the Descriptions

- ✓ The report may include details about the event. Focus on the sequence of events and how the incident is described.

Check Evidence and Findings

- ✓ Ensure that any physical evidence, such as injuries, clothing, or forensic exam results, are included.
- ✓ Check if the medical records or rape kit were referenced as evidence.

Look for Investigation Status

- ✓ The report will indicate if the police have made an arrest or are continuing to investigate.
- ✓ It may also describe next steps, like further interviews or evidence testing.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OR CLARIFY WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

How to clarify information:

- ✓ If you don't understand something in the report, don't hesitate to ask the police.
- ✓ Call the records division and ask for help in reading or understanding the report.
- ✓ Important Tip: Ask for explanations about any legal or investigative terms you may not understand.

Other concerns to raise:

- ✓ What is the status of the investigation?
- ✓ Are there additional steps to take to ensure justice for the survivor?
- ✓ What services are available for support, such as victim advocacy or counseling?

KEEPING A COPY OF THE REPORT

Storing the Report:

- ✓ Keep the police report in a safe and private place. You may need it for future legal proceedings or as a reference during therapy or counseling.
- ✓ Consider making copies of the report for legal support, therapy, or advocacy purposes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Victim Advocates:

- ✓ If you need help understanding the report or require additional support, consider reaching out to a **victim advocate** or **rape crisis center**. They can provide guidance and emotional support throughout the legal process.
- ✓ Contact information for victim advocacy: _____

10.0 HEAL

Therapy can help a survivor and their family heal through the trauma, reclaim their sexuality and autonomy, improve their physical health, and regain their own power and control. To find a therapist, please reach out to your local Rape Crisis Center.

Examples of Therapy Types:

1 Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that involves dwelling on a positive mental image or scene. It is a tool that psychotherapists use, but a person can also teach it to themselves and use it at any time. This technique is sometimes called visualization, or guided meditation. There are many benefits to using guided imagery, such as reducing stress or improving a person's sense of well-being.

2 Thought Field Therapy

Thought Field Therapy™ (TFT) is an energy-based form of psychotherapy designed to reduce symptoms of psychological distress by manipulating how energy flows in the body. TFT is based on the premise that bodies consist of energy fields and that imbalances in this system cause physical and emotional issues. It is thought imbalances can be corrected by finger-tapping specific energy points in certain sequences in order to restore an individual's health and wellness.

3 Somatic Experiencing

Somatic Experiencing is a body-centered approach to treating PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) that, rather than focusing only on thoughts or emotions associated with a traumatic event, expands to include the natural bodily (somatic) responses.

4 Purpose and Affirmation

Affirmation therapy involves the therapist's affective, rather than effective, presence with a client. In other words, it is a way of "being" with a person as opposed to "doing" something to or for them. Affirmation therapy can be formally described as a way of being affectively present to another human person in a therapeutic relationship in which the therapist reveals to the client their intrinsic goodness and worth.



5 Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR is a highly effective, evidence-based therapy for processing trauma, including abuse. It involves guided eye movements or other forms of bilateral stimulation (such as tapping or auditory cues) to help individuals reprocess traumatic memories in a way that reduces their emotional intensity. For survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), EMDR can be adapted to meet their cognitive and communication needs, using simpler language, visual supports, and a slower-paced approach. By engaging in EMDR, individuals can develop a healthier relationship with past traumatic experiences, reducing distress and improving emotional regulation.



6 Art & Music Therapy

Art and music therapy provide creative, nonverbal ways for survivors of sexual abuse to express emotions, process trauma, and regain a sense of control.

- Art Therapy allows individuals to use drawing, painting, or sculpting to communicate feelings they may struggle to verbalize. This can be especially beneficial for those with IDD, as it provides a tangible, accessible way to explore and process difficult emotions in a safe environment.
- Music Therapy uses rhythm, sound, and melody to promote emotional healing. Listening to or creating music can help regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of empowerment. For individuals with IDD, music therapy can be tailored to their abilities and preferences, incorporating familiar songs, interactive instruments, or movement-based activities to enhance engagement and emotional expression.

10.1 REFLECTION

It can be very healing to share your story, as this can help in letting go of the past and moving on. Sharing stories among survivors and their family also helps to have a reflective process needed to help people to understand their collective wounds, as well as the changes that have occurred.

Share Your Story

The Natalie Project strives to empower survivors and their supporters in their journey of healing. We do this by amplifying the stories of those who have experienced trauma and abuse in an environment where everyone feels empowered to share their story in an anonymous setting.



We have partnered with Our Wave in providing a safe space for healing where everyone feels seen, heard, and respected. We invite you to join a community of hope and healing www.ourwave.org.

Find a Therapist

Finding the right therapist for a loved one with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who is a sexual abuse survivor requires careful consideration.

Start by looking for a therapist who specializes in both trauma and working with individuals with IDD. Seek professionals with experience in evidence-based trauma therapies, such as EMDR, art therapy, or somatic experiencing, and ensure they can adapt their approach to meet your loved one's communication and cognitive needs.

It's important to ask about their training, therapeutic techniques, and experience with both trauma and IDD. Additionally, consider the comfort level and rapport between the therapist and your loved one—therapy should feel safe, supportive, and accessible.

Connecting with advocacy organizations, support groups, or medical professionals for recommendations can also help in finding a qualified and compassionate therapist.



Mental Health Resources and Practitioners for People with IDD- NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness. They are the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization.

<https://www.nami.org/your-journey/identity-and-cultural-dimensions/people-with-disabilities/>

Questions To Ask When Contacting a New Therapist

- 1** What types of therapy do you practice?
- 2** Are there any types that you specialize in?
- 3** Do you work with survivors of trauma and abuse?
- 4** Do you work with people with IDD?
- 5** How do you alter your practices when working with someone with IDD?
- 6** Have you ever worked with someone who uses alternate forms of communication? (Specify.)
- 7** Do you have any other therapists you would recommend? (If they are not a fit.)

SUPPORT WORKER BACKGROUND GUIDANCE

Take some time and get to know those in the program who are supporting your loved one. Know that staff changes can be very common. You may want to do routine check-ins about new staff that have been hired. Use this sheet as a manual to support your search.

Conducting an internet search on employees at a program serving people with disabilities can be useful for gathering information about the staff's qualifications, background, and professional reputation.

Here's a step-by-step guide to conducting an effective search:

-  **1** Start with the organization's website and check for a staff directory. Many organizations list key staff members and their roles on the website. You can find out who works at the program and sometimes their qualifications or experience.
 - **Look for bios:** If available, read through the staff bios to get an understanding of their training, professional background, and certifications.
-  **2** Search for Employee Names on LinkedIn.
 - **Search individual staff profiles:** If you know the names of the employees (e.g., support workers, program directors), search for them on LinkedIn. This professional networking platform often lists work experience, education, certifications, and endorsements from colleagues.
 - **Check for professional groups:** LinkedIn may also show involvement in professional organizations related to disabilities, caregiving, or social work.
-  **3** Use Google to Search for Employee Information.
 - **Enter the name and title:** Search for the employee's name along with the name of the organization and their job title. This might bring up professional profiles, mentions in news stories, conference attendance, or other publicly available information.
 - **Check for reviews:** Look for reviews or forums where people discuss their experiences with the program. Sometimes individuals leave feedback on specific staff members, providing insight into their professionalism and care standards.

4 Search for Professional Certifications

- **Certifications and Training:** Many support workers are required to hold specific certifications (such as CPR, first aid, or disability support training). Search for certifications that are commonly required for the role (e.g., DSP certification, CNA, etc.) to verify that staff members have the necessary qualifications.

5 Check with State Licensing Agencies

- **Verify credentials:** Many states or localities have licensing boards or regulatory agencies that monitor professionals in fields like caregiving or social work. You can search for the employee's name to see if they hold any relevant licenses or have any disciplinary actions against them.
- **Search for background check results:** Some states offer online tools to search for criminal history or misconduct records for professionals who work with vulnerable populations.

6 Look for Social Media Profiles

- **Public profiles:** If staff members have public social media accounts (such as Facebook, X, or Instagram), you may be able to learn more about them. However, this information might not always be relevant to their professional role, and it's important to respect privacy boundaries.

7 Review Online Complaints and Compliments

- **Search for complaints:** If you are concerned about the quality of care, look for any online complaints or reports filed against the individual or program. Websites like Yelp, Better Business Bureau, or even social media can sometimes provide reviews about staff members.
- **Seek positive feedback:** Look for positive feedback or testimonials from others who may have worked with the employee or interacted with the program. Reviews from parents or guardians of individuals with disabilities can give a more balanced view of the staff's effectiveness and care.

8 Contact the Program for Clarification and Request More Information.

- If you're unable to find sufficient details through online sources, you can directly contact the program for more information about their employees. Ask for details on the staff members' qualifications, experience, and training, especially regarding abuse prevention and other relevant care practices.



Use Background Check Services (if authorized)

- **Professional background check services:** If allowed by law and with the appropriate consent, you can request a background check through a professional service to ensure there are no criminal records or other concerns associated with the employee.

Important Considerations: Respect privacy regulations and laws, such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) and state-specific privacy protections. Some employee information may not be accessible without proper consent.

Accuracy: Information available online may not always be up-to-date or accurate. Always verify details with the organization directly when possible.

By conducting a thorough online search and following up with the organization directly, you can ensure you have the necessary information to make informed decisions about the care they are receiving.

BACKGROUND SEARCH WORKSHEET

This worksheet is designed to help you conduct a thorough background search on employees or support workers in a program that serves people with disabilities. This process helps ensure that you are informed about the qualifications, history, and reliability of the staff working with family.

1 Identify the Employee or Support Worker

- Name of Employee: _____
- Position/Role: _____
- Program/Organization Name: _____
- Date(s) of Employment: _____
- Supervisor or Direct Contact Person: _____

2 Search for Public Information

Use online resources to gather basic information about the employee.

1 LinkedIn Profile:

- Check for their professional background, certifications, education, and work history.

2 Google Search:

- Search the name of the employee along with the organization or program.
- Look for any mentions in news articles, reviews, or social media posts.

3 Social Media:

- Check if the person has a public social media profile (Facebook, X, etc.).
- Look for any posts or interactions that might relate to their professional conduct or qualifications.

3 Check Professional Licensing or Certification Licensing Boards:

- Search for the employee's name in relevant state or national licensing databases (e.g., healthcare, caregiving, social work).
- Check if they hold any necessary certifications (e.g., DSP certification, CNA, CPR, First Aid).

Disciplinary Records:

- Look for any disciplinary actions or complaints filed against the individual.

4 Review Program's Hiring and Training Policies

Ask the Program About Their Hiring Process:

- Does the program conduct background checks on employees?
- What is the interview process like?
- Are criminal background checks done regularly?

Abuse Prevention Training:

- Does the program require employees to undergo sexual abuse prevention training?
- Does the program provide ongoing education about working with individuals with disabilities?
- Are employees trained in reporting abuse, recognizing signs of abuse, and understanding the needs of individuals with disabilities?

5 Look for Any Past Complaints or Reviews

Sex Offender Registry:

- National
- State

Online Reviews:

- Check review websites (e.g., Yelp, Google Reviews) to see if there are any reviews about the employee or program.
- Look for any complaints about the individual's conduct, professionalism, or treatment of clients.

Ask for References:

- Contact the program to ask for references about the employee's past performance or any feedback from other families or clients they have worked with.

State or Local Complaints:

- Search for any complaints filed with government agencies or advocacy organizations related to this employee.

6 Contact the Program or Organization

Request More Information:

- Contact the program to ask for a copy of the employee's qualifications, background check, and any training certificates.
- Inquire about the program's procedures for handling allegations of abuse or misconduct.

Discuss Concerns:

- If you have concerns about the employee, ask the program how they address and resolve such issues.
- Ask for clarification about the steps taken when abuse or misconduct is reported.



Document Your Findings

Record all the information you gathered during your search. This will help you stay organized and informed.

What did you find?

- Summarize any positive or concerning findings.
- Highlight any qualifications or certifications that are relevant.
- Note any red flags or concerns regarding their background.

Do you feel comfortable with this employee working with them?

- Yes
- No
- Need further information/clarification

Always remember to respect privacy laws and guidelines when conducting background checks. If you are unsure about your legal rights to obtain certain information, consult a legal professional or advocate who specializes in the rights of people with disabilities.

SUMMARY OF PLAN

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

“A Guide on Responding to Suspected Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities. Ten Tips for Parents or Family Members whose Loved One Receives School, Residential, Transportation, Day Program, Vocational, or Other Direct or Support Services” By Nora Baladerian, Ph.D.⁸

BEFORE:

- 1** Assess Communication Strengths: Understand the individual's communication abilities.
- 2** Identify Communication Methods: Develop a way to communicate key details about a crime (who, what, when, where, why).
- 3** Create Cues for Communication: Plan methods for informing trusted individuals about the crime after it happens.
- 4** Practice Storytelling: Rehearse narrating simple life events (e.g., a birthday party or regular day) to strengthen communication skills.
- 5** Create a Family Plan: As a family, develop a Before/During/After plan. Discuss common crimes seen in the media and how to identify potentially dangerous situations.
- 6** Practice Intuition: Help the individual understand how to sense when something feels unsafe. Encourage using their intuition.
- 7** Monthly Drills: Practice the plan regularly, similar to a natural disaster drill.
- 8** Sexuality Education: Teach proper names for body parts and sexual acts. This can help during the “after” phase and provide clarity in the “during” phase. It's okay to giggle, but learning is crucial.

DURING:

- 1** If a crime is happening, your first priority is survival. Follow the perpetrator's instructions **if necessary** to stay safe — even if they promise that no one will be told.
- 2** Observe and Record Details: Pay close attention to the details of the attack. Record what you hear, see, smell, and feel. Note what was said, what the attacker looked like, and any other distinguishing details. Your statement could help law enforcement catch the attacker.
- 3** Physical and Mental Health: Focus on self-preservation. As soon as possible, get to a safe location or contact someone who can help, including 911.

⁸ <https://norabaladerian.com/2020/07/05/a-guide-on-responding-to-suspected-abuse-of-people-with-developmental-disabilities-by-dr-baladerian/>

AFTER:

- 1** Implement the Plan: Use the communication system and plan developed earlier to inform the designated person.
- 2** Preserve Evidence: If sexually abused, do not wash, change clothes, or clean up, as these may contain evidence for law enforcement.
- 3** Stay Calm: If you are the person hearing about the crime, listen attentively and stay calm. Reassure the survivor that they did a good job surviving and following the plan. Emphasize that “Your power is AFTER.”
- 4** Report the Crime: Call 911 and any relevant agencies for support. Remind the survivor not to change clothes or shower if the crime was sexual abuse.
- 5** Reinforce the Plan: Reflect on the successful execution of the plan. Acknowledge that you followed the steps, and praise the survivor for their courage and ability to follow the plan.
- 6** Believe and Support: It’s vital to believe the survivor. Avoid asking “why” it happened, as this can be counterproductive and unintentionally place blame on the survivor. Simply express your belief and offer support.

YOUR TO DO LIST

- 1** Listen to NPR's series, "Abused and Betrayed".
<https://www.npr.org/series/575502633/abused-and-betrayed>
- 2** Take a sexual education course (refer to the Resource Sheet for more details) **or visit our website [TheNatalieProject.org](https://www.thenatalieproject.org) for more details.**
- 3** Learn about the hiring practices and abuse prevention training protocols of the disability support agency or organization.
- 4** Inquire with the disability support program about their policies on sexual abuse.
- 5** Complete the Support Worker Background worksheet.
- 6** Develop your Before, During, and After Plan.
- 7** Complete the "4.1 Who In Your Community Support Support Survivors?".
- 8** Find a Mental Health Practitioner
- 9** Follow The Natalie Project on social media for updates and resources.
www.thenatalieproject.org and @thenatalieproject.

IN CLOSING...

Thank you for using this manual. I hope it has been both informative and supportive on your journey. If you have any suggestions or feedback, please don't hesitate to reach out.

The trauma of my sister's rape is something I carry with me every day, but I am working toward my own healing by channeling my energy into both individual and collective action.

This is my commitment, and I invite you to join me in this important work.

We need champions. Those who are ready to stand up, support survivors, and drive lasting change. If you'd like to learn more or support our ongoing efforts, please visit www.TheNatalieProject.org to see our latest projects and how you can help.

You can email me directly at Julie@TheNatalieProject.org.



@TheNatalieProject

Thank you for being a part of this movement.

Warm regards,

Julie Payne-Neward with support from
The Natalie Project Advisory Board

Julie@TheNatalieProject.org



REFERENCES, RESOURCES, & LINKS

- National Sexual Assault Hotline
<https://hotline.rainn.org/online>
- Resource Library
<https://www.endabusepwd.org/tools-and-training/resources-library/>
- Supporting Survivors Guide
<https://www.valor.us/publications/supporting-sexual-assault-survivors-with-developmental-disabilities-in-california-a-resource-guide/>
- A Guide on Responding to Suspected Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities.
<https://norabaladerian.com/2020/07/05/a-guide-on-responding-to-suspected-abuse-of-people-with-developmental-disabilities-by-dr-baladerian/>
- Population of People with IDD in the US
<https://publications.ici.umn.edu/risp/data-bytes/prevalence-of-idd-in-the-us>
- Household Living Situation
<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2024/01/22/caregiving-pressure-mount-for-families-of-those-with-idd/30703/>
- Rate of Sexual Abuse
<https://www.npr.org/series/575502633/abused-and-betrayed>
- Dr. Nora Baladerian's Guidebooks
<https://norabaladerian.com/guidebooks/>
- Nora Baladerian's Guide
<https://norabaladerian.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/brochure-nora-presentations.pdf>
- Justice For Crimes Victims with Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System: An Examination of Barriers and Impetus for Change
<https://disabilityjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/Fitzsimons-Justice-for-Crimes-Victims-with-Disabilities.pdf>
- Journal of Counseling Sexology & Sexual Wellness: Research, Practice, and Education
<https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1073&context=jcssw>
- VALOR
<https://www.valor.us/>
- Rise
<https://risenow.us/impact/>
- Our Wave
<https://www.ourwave.org/>
- NAMI
<https://www.nami.org/your-journey/identity-and-cultural-dimensions/people-with-disabilities/>

PLAIN LANGUAGE RESOURCES

This list of resources may be helpful to share and review with your family member. They are each written in plain language, which can be helpful for people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities, English learners, and people dealing with trauma.

- Ableism and Violence Guide
<https://www.endabusepwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Ableism-and-Violence-Guide-9.964.pdf>
- Forensic Examination Photo Guide
<https://arcminnesota.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ASHC-Picture-Guide-Sexual-Assault-Exam-3.15.19.pdf>
- Mandated Reporting Guide
<https://www.valor.us/publications/reporting-abuse-who-what-when-where-why-and-how/>
- Sexual Health Toolkit
<https://yoursexualhealthtoolkit.org/>