



Talking about violence and abuse

SL&RR was developed to raise awareness with people with intellectual disabilities about their right to respectful relationships.



Violence and abuse is used in this series as an umbrella terms to include sexual assault, physical harm/abuse, physical restraint, emotional abuse, financial restriction, social restriction, legal restriction, reproductive abuse, neglect, restraint from medication or medical aid, refusal of essential care, bullying, threat to family, friends, or pets, or stalking.

In 2016, the Australian Bureau of Statistics said that 43% of people with disability aged between 18-24 years have experienced sexual abuse.¹ Women with disability experience violence more often than women without disability. Women with disabilities can experience this from partners, family, carers or friends. Sometimes people are violent and abuse others because they do not respect women with intellectual disability and think they can more easily be controlled. Violence and abuse stops someone from doing what they want or may include forced behaviors someone does not want to do. This is wrong.



"It is important to make sure you are in a good and safe relationship, not a violent one. Some people might not have information about this, so you can help them to get information about relationships and sex how talk to a counsellor" Linda Stokoe, SL&RR Peer Educator

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/latestProducts/4431.0.55.003Media%20Release42016>

This information is linked to a resource called Making rights reality, downloadable via the SL&RR website

Women with intellectual disability may have trouble having their stories of violence and abuse heard, and believed. The Police or other services may not know how to support women with intellectual disability in the same way as they support other women. One way to change this is to challenge the way people with intellectual disability are seen in society. SL&RR does this through the use of Peer Educators to deliver the program alongside community Program Partners, and through focussing discussion and learning around the real stories told by other people with intellectual disability.

Advocacy and self-advocacy is a way of increasing the choices that are available to people. This includes empowering people to make decisions about having respect in their own relationships, and supporting them to have their decisions heard.

For people with intellectual disability, having people in services or in their family who have control over them means that their homes and services may also be places where they experience violence or abuse. All of these things need to be understood when delivering SL&RR and talking to people about the program.

“As part of... the royal commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, we must engage with these issues and see the complexity of developing strong prevention approaches that also acknowledge the sexuality and relationship rights of people with disability. It’s important that sex and relationships can be discussed in a way that acknowledges the full experience for people with intellectual disabilities. We want sexuality in the lives of people with an intellectual disability to be understood from their perspective” Associate Professor Patsie Frawley, Deakin University (as quoted in Promoting Sexuality Rights Link Magazine. Volume 28 Issue 3, 32-33)

What to do after your conversation about violence and abuse?



It is important that you link the person is with suitable and appropriate services to the can access more information and the help they might need. If there are in immediate danger, call 000. Sexual Assault and family violence services need to be acceptable, approachable, affordable, available. ²

² <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/whatever-it-takes-access-for-women-with-disabilities-to-domestic-and-family-violence-services-key-findings-and-future-directions/>

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