

# PARTNERSHIPS TO PROTECT SELF-ADVOCATES

**COASTAL**  
FAMILY PARTNERS



## MINIMIZING INSTANCES OF LEWD ACTS (M.I.L.A.)

A public awareness campaign shedding light on the sexual assault rates of persons with developmental disabilities and how our community can get involved.



This public awareness campaign, Minimizing Instances of Lewd Acts (M.I.L.A), is sponsored by the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Disclaimer: This booklet may be duplicated to share for educational use. The content within is intended to inform professionals and other service providers who work with persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). When light is shed on unknown phenomena, we believe that as a community we can work together to protect those most vulnerable.



# DID YOU KNOW?

## 19% vs 36%

Nineteen percent of rapes or sexual assaults against persons with disabilities were reported to police, compared to 36% of those against persons without disabilities (Harrell, 2021).



## 7 x's HIGHER

People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at much higher numbers — "more than seven times higher than the rate for persons with no disabilities" (Shapiro, 2018).

## 90%

More than 90 percent of people with developmental disabilities will experience sexual abuse at some point in their lives. Forty-nine percent will experience 10 or more abusive incidents (Valenti-Hein & Schwartz, 1995).



## 40%

Women with disabilities have a 40 percent greater chance of intimate partner violence than women without disabilities (American Psychological Association, 2017).

# WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Gender-based violence impacts the lives of countless women and their families across the United States. Women and girls of all ages, income levels, racial and ethnic communities, sexual orientations and abilities experience violence in the form of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, trafficking and stalking.

Women and girls with disabilities are at higher risk for violence, experience violence more often, more severely, and have more barriers to getting support. Women and girls with disabilities are often left out of the mainstream dialogue about gender-based violence altogether despite their heightened risk.

Becoming aware of, and fulfilling the needs of, women and girls with developmental disabilities in your community can make a world of difference.



- MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED <sup>1</sup>
- 50 PERCENT OF THESE WOMEN HAVE BEEN ASSAULTED MORE THAN TEN TIMES <sup>2</sup>
- IN ADDITION, RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES EXPERIENCE MORE FREQUENT AND MORE SEVERE ACTS OF VIOLENCE <sup>3</sup>

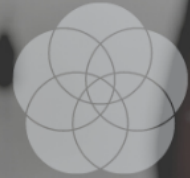
Excerpts from Survivors with Disabilities Facts - YWCA USA. [www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/Survivors-w-Disabilities-Fact-Sheet.pdf](http://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/Survivors-w-Disabilities-Fact-Sheet.pdf).

Sobsey, D. & Doe, T. Sex Disability (1991) 9: 243. doi:10.1007/BF01102395  
4. Violence against women with disabilities, Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015)



# MINIMIZING INSTANCES OF LEWD ACTS (M.I.L.A) CAMPAIGNS:

HOW WE STIRRED DISCUSSION IN MOBILE COUNTY



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*Approximately 80% of women and 30% of men with intellectual disabilities have been sexually assaulted-half of these women have been assaulted more than 10 times.*

*-Disabled World News (2021-05-2)*

**Help Self-Advocates FIGHT Back**

*Join us in building a community of care*  
[www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com](http://www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com)

THIS DIGITAL CAMPAIGN REACHED APPROXIMATELY 10,000 INDIVIDUALS IN MOBILE COUNTY AND EVOKED A RANGE OF EMOTIONS FROM OUR AUDIENCE. FOR A FREE STACK OF INFOGRAPHICS PICTURED BELOW, PLEASE EMAIL [MISSION@COASTALFAMILYPARTNERS.COM](mailto:MISSION@COASTALFAMILYPARTNERS.COM)

¿USTED HA OÍDO HABLAR DE LA

## ALARMANTE

tasa de agresiones sexuales contra las personas con discapacidades intelectuales/del desarrollo?



### EL ESTUDIO

Las personas con discapacidad intelectual son agredidas sexualmente en una proporción siete veces mayor que las que no tienen discapacidad (Shapiro, 2018).

### ¿POR QUÉ ESTÁN EN RIESGO?

No hay una respuesta sencilla del porqué. Lo que sí sabemos es que hay factores de riesgo que aumentan la probabilidad de sufrir agresiones. Para ciertos, los factores de riesgo incluyen:

1. Falta de educación sobre la anatomía,
2. La falta de educación sexual, y
3. Falta de educación sobre seguridad personal.

### PERO ADEMÁS,

También sabemos que el contacto médico frecuente resulta ser necesario para las personas con discapacidades intelectuales y del desarrollo, lo que provoca frecuentemente que sean complacientes con cualquier contacto.



### MITO # 1

Las personas con discapacidades del desarrollo no necesitan conocimiento de su cuerpo ni de sus límites.

### MITO # 2

Las personas con discapacidades de desarrollo no pueden denunciar si son sometidas a acalamiento o han sido agredidas.

### LA VERDAD

Las personas con discapacidades del desarrollo pueden entender información simplificada que puede protegerlas, como reconocer qué es el acalamiento, cuáles son sus límites y el nombre de las partes de su cuerpo. Incluso pueden denunciar situaciones incómodas si se les proporcionan instrucciones detalladas.

### ¿QUÉ PUEDO HACER?

Todos podemos normalizar la educación sexual de los jóvenes y adultos con discapacidades del desarrollo y denunciar cuando sospechemos que una persona con discapacidad ha sufrido abusos. Establezcamos entornos más seguros y mayor conciencia en nuestra comunidad. Únete a la Comunidad de Atención en [www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com](http://www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com).

Patrocinado por:

Esta campaña de concienciación pública ha sido desarrollada por Coastal Family Partners, que recibe financiación del Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities para el proyecto MILA.



HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE

## ALARMING

Rates of sexual assault against people with intellectual/developmental disabilities?



### THE RESEARCH

People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities (Shapiro, 2018).

### WHY ARE THEY AT RISK?

There's not a simple answer for why. But, we do know there are risk factors that increase the likelihood of assault. For some, risk factors include:

1. Lack of education about anatomy,
2. Lack of sexual education, and
3. Lack of personal safety education.

### BUT ALSO,

We also know that frequent **medical touch** may be necessary for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, oftentimes making them compliant to any touch.



### MYTH # 1

People with developmental disabilities do not need to know about their bodies or boundaries.

### MYTH # 2

People with developmental disabilities cannot report if they are being groomed or have been assaulted.

### THE TRUTH

Many people with developmental disabilities can understand simplified information that may protect them--such as recognizing what grooming is, what their boundaries are, and the name of their body parts. They can even report uncomfortable situations if provided with step-by-step instructions.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

We all can normalize sex education for youth and adults with developmental disabilities and report when we suspect abuse has happened to a person with a disability. Let's create safer environments and more awareness within our community. Join the Community of Care at [www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com](http://www.CoastalFamilyPartners.com).

Sponsored By:

This public awareness campaign was developed by Coastal Family Partners which receives funding from the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities for its MILA Project.







## STRATEGY: DESTIGMATIZE SEXUAL EDUCATION!

**"One of the best ways to stop sexual assault is to give people with intellectual disabilities the ability to identify abuse and to know how to develop the healthy relationships they want and deserve" (Shapiro, 2018).**

Destigmatizing the role of sexual education for people with intellectual disabilities is imperative. Those who can label body parts, recognize healthy boundaries, and understand the concept of consent may feel more empowered to stop grooming attempts in their tracks or immediately report when they've been in an uncomfortable situation.

Fortunately, research suggests that the more individuals with intellectual disabilities are exposed to appropriate sex education, the less likely they are to be victimized (McCabe, 1992).

Essentially, it's up to our community to equip self-advocates with information, resources, and knowledge on how to communicate when they feel uncomfortable and why.

SHAPIRO, JOSEPH. "THE SEXUAL ASSAULT EPIDEMIC NO ONE TALKS ABOUT." NPR, 8 JAN. 2018, [WWW.NPR.ORG/2018/01/08/570224090/THE-SEXUAL-ASSAULT-EPIDEMIC-NO-ONE-TALKS-ABOUT](http://WWW.NPR.ORG/2018/01/08/570224090/THE-SEXUAL-ASSAULT-EPIDEMIC-NO-ONE-TALKS-ABOUT).



# OTHER RISK FACTORS & STRATEGIES

## ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS

### **Two common myths about the intellectually disabled community:**

1. People with disabilities do not need to know about their bodies or boundaries.
2. People with developmental disabilities cannot report if they are being groomed or have been assaulted.

**STRATEGY:** Many people with developmental disabilities can understand simplified information that may protect them---such as recognizing what grooming is, what their boundaries are, and the name of their body parts. They can even report uncomfortable situations if provided with step by step instructions.



### LACK OF COMMUNICATION DURING MEDICAL TOUCH

We also know that frequent medical touch may be necessary for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Oftentimes, this may lead to being compliant with other kinds of touch.

**STRATEGY:** During routine medical visits, healthcare professionals can help by verbally communicating when and where they are preparing to touch the patient. If the patient is hearing impaired, demonstrate where the touch will occur.

# HOW YOU CAN ACT:



**You've already taken the most important step:  
stopping to take notice of what another person may be experiencing.**

Now, we implore you to act by sharing what you've learned with someone else. Shedding light on these dark occurrences is half the battle as many are unaware of these statistics.

Here's what you can do to intervene if you know a person with I/DD is being sexually assaulted, exploited, or suspect they're being groomed:

1. Call 911 or contact the local police department immediately if the abuse is confirmed or suspected.
2. Unfortunately, some cases may not be taken seriously by authorities if the victim has I/DD that greatly impede verbal communication. In this case, visit a medical center with the self-advocate for help.
3. For self-advocates that you know, help them develop a care plan that incorporates education, empowerment, and a way to communicate when they need help.
4. Overcome any implicit biases regarding persons with I/DD not needing sexual education.
5. Advocate for community-based classes that provide accessible healthy boundaries/sex education classes.
6. Reach out to specialists like the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network if you are in an especially challenging situation.



**SCAN ME**

# ABOUT COASTAL FAMILY PARTNERS

At Coastal Family Partners, we are driven by the power of community support, also known as a village. We were founded in 2020 as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit and have experienced rapid growth since inception. We believe this is due in part to our sincere mission of partnering with all families, but especially those most disadvantaged. Our work is grounded in an upstream and direct service approach where we seek to understand how to prevent our community's most pressing issues while cultivating programs for service to those most in need.

## MISSION

Coastal Family Partners works side by side with traditionally disadvantaged populations to boost family well-being by identifying and bridging resource gaps.

## VISION

To contribute to resilient and healthy families and individuals who overcome life's challenges.

## CONTACT US

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Scan here to visit our website!



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