

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities experience higher rates of violence/abuse and face many barriers to leaving the abusive situation and when accessing services. Women with disabilities and Deaf women are victimized at a higher rate than women without disabilities and may experience more severe forms of physical violence, and more forms of abuse including neglect, sexual abuse, and financial exploitation.

When preparing to leave an abusive relationship

- ☐ You have the right to be selective in who you ask for help, especially with physical needs. If the person you tell doesn't believe your experience, or you struggle communicating with them, tell someone else.
- ☐ Reflect on previous experiences of when you tried to leave or stayed in the relationship. Identify the threats made, attempts to contact you, barriers created, and other experiences that affect finding a safe place or shelter, and support workers.
- ☐ Learn more about which local shelters or agencies that have accessible rooms or can meet your needs, including having a personal care attendant or support animal come with you, meet the needs of your child(ren), and have a TTY number to help with contact.
- ☐ Consider including case workers or personal support workers in the creation of the safety plan. If you require support with this task, work with the Transitional Support Program at Halton Women's Place to address additional barriers to leaving.
- ☐ If you experienced abuse by your personal support worker or attendant, consider filing a complaint with the organization and/or request a new worker. If you are accessing a shelter, work with them to obtain a new attendant.
- ☐ Consider possible barriers to leaving your home and identify options for addressing them (transportation, location of exits, access to medication, rooms with increased danger, communicating for help, access to important documents or personal belongings)
- ☐ If you live in a group setting, identify staff you feel safe talking to about your relationship or safety plan. If you're experiencing abuse by a staff person in the group living situation, identify other people you can disclose your experience to and access support in activating your safety plan.
- ☐ If medication abuse by a caregiver is a concern, consider ways you can either secure medication or other's access to your medication. If you require support with your medication, identify other people who can provide that support.
- ☐ If you have to leave the abusive relationship without your medication, consider taking a picture of the medication container, or keep a list of your active medications including the doctor who prescribed them. When in a safe place, connect with your doctor, or pharmacist for support in getting the prescriptions filled.
- ☐ If possible, find ways to keep your personal belongings, identification (including those of your children), and contact lists where your abusive (ex)partner cannot access.

- ☐ Identify items you should have with you or will have to get after you leave to help you feel emotionally and physically safe, including items for your children.
- ☐ If possible, obtain an emergency cell phone and find places it can be tucked away or hidden (turn ringer off) to increase access to emergency services if needed.
- ☐ If you have a disability affecting verbal communication, use a landline phone (cordless preferred) so if 911 is called they will respond regardless if there is communication with the dispatcher. If you use non-traditional forms of communication, consider having a pre-recorded message ready and near your phone to use when calling 911.
- ☐ In parts of Ontario (including Halton Region) a person with disabilities can contact 911 through text, but registration is required. For more information visit <http://textwith911.ca/en/home/>
- ☐ If you can't access 911, consider using medical alert devices to help with calling for help.

After you have left an abusive relationship

- ☐ If there is a no-contact order in place, have a copy of it with you at all times, share copies with your workplace, school, or other important locations. Call 911 if it's breached.
- ☐ When seeking out services, learn about whether services are accessible, can the service meet your needs (including the needs of your children), and address transportation.
- ☐ Learn about how an organization will maintain your confidentiality when seeking out referrals, or bringing in support services to meet your needs.
- ☐ Identify a list of services/organizations/employers/financial and insurance institutions you have connected with to note the change of your address, and not to share your contact information with specific people (i.e. family member, or ex-partner).
- ☐ When having to detail the abuse you experienced (i.e. for housing or legal papers), use a power & control wheel specific to people with disabilities and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to name tactics experienced
- ☐ Work with the shelter on how you can participate in shelter tasks (chores, cooking, meetings, child care) and ways to accommodate your accessibility needs.
- ☐ If an organization is asking your children to complete tasks on your behalf or do the work of an attendant, indicate to your worker it is not appropriate and ask to have services brought in instead.
- ☐ If you did not have any access to your financial information, learn about resources to build financial stability or to address barriers in financial independence.
- ☐ If available, familiarize yourself with accessible transportation in your area or the area of the shelter.
- ☐ Seek out medical or holistic health care or dental care to address stress disorders, possible addiction support, dietary needs, reproductive and sexual health concerns, and any other preventative health care.
- ☐ Build a support network. Connect with other people who have experienced violence, and with other people with disabilities.
- ☐ If you received a service that violates your rights or was harassing/abusive, if emotionally prepared, consider filing an application to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.
- ☐ If you have left the abusive relationship and have concerns about your safety, use items with flashing lights or vibration attached to motion detector, alarm system or door bell.

- ☐ If you have a disability affecting verbal communication, use a landline phone (cordless preferred) so if 911 is called they will respond regardless if there is communication with the dispatcher.
- ☐ If you use non-traditional forms of communication, consider having a pre-recorded message ready and near your phone to use when calling 911.
- ☐ In parts of Ontario (including Halton Region) a person with disabilities can contact 911 through text, but registration is required. For more information visit <http://textwith911.ca/en/home/>
- ☐ If 911 is not an option, consider using medical alert devices to help with calling for help.

Resources

- DisAbled Women's Network Canada (DAWN) offers advocacy to address the needs of women with disabilities focusing on experiences of poverty, isolation, discrimination, and violence. DAWN works towards the advancement and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and Deaf women in Canada. For more information visit www.dawncanada.net or call 1-866-396-0074.

Sources

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CREVAWC, 2017., DAWN Canada., Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research, 2011., Safety First Initiative, 2006.