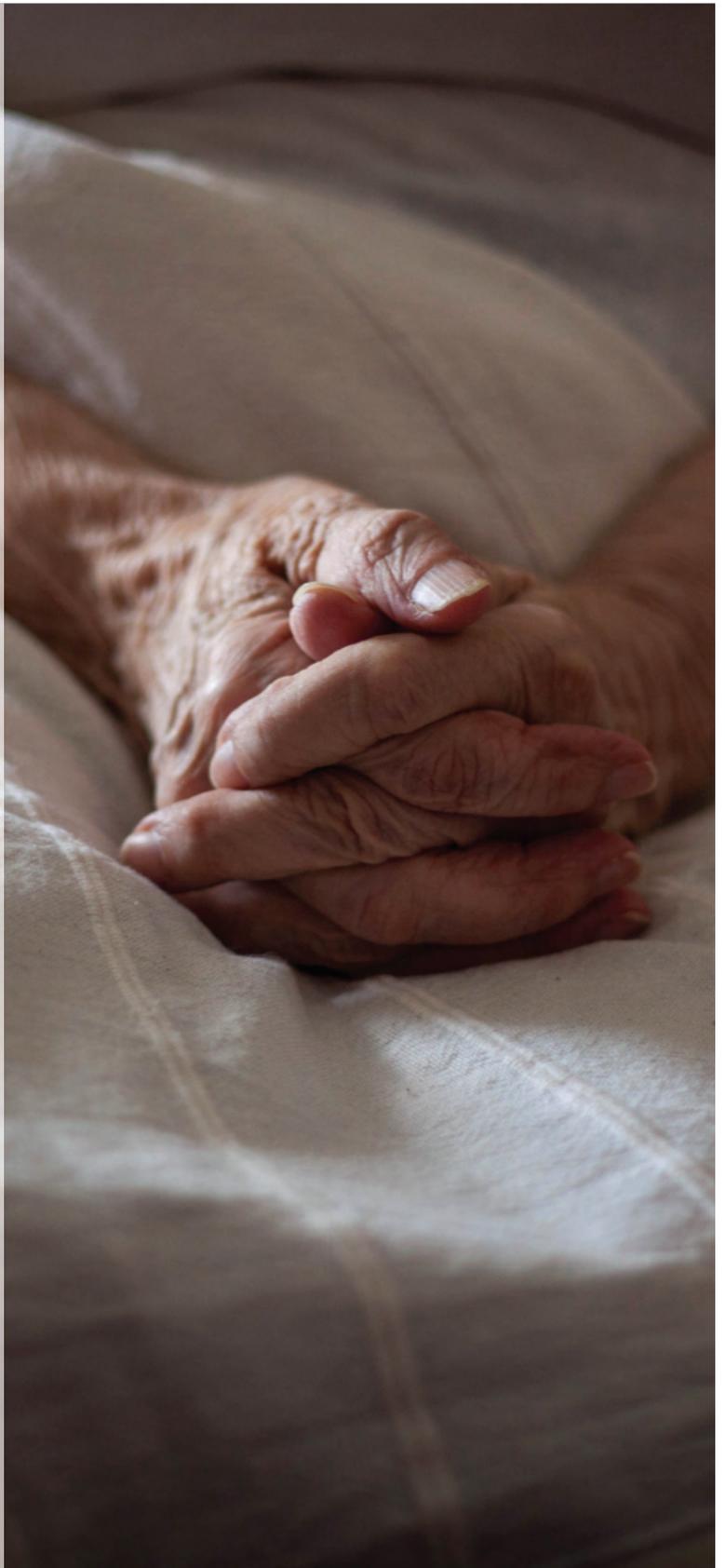


**EGUIDE**

**7 Steps to  
Prevent  
Exploitation  
of Individuals  
with I/DD**



## **EGUIDE**

# 7 Steps to Prevent Exploitation of Individuals with I/DD

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## What You'll Learn

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are at a much greater risk for abuse than the general population. In fact, people with disabilities are one of the most harmed groups in the US and experience a rate of violent victimizations 2.5 times higher than the rate for those without disabilities.

People with disabilities are three times more likely to experience rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and robbery than those without disabilities.\*

While there is limited research on the connection between disability and violence, existing studies conclude that they are inextricably linked. Not only do disabled individuals experience a higher incidence of victimization, they are more likely to suffer more severe victimization, for a longer duration, and over the course of multiple episodes.

To protect those in your care from exploitation, it's important for community staff to understand the risk factors among individuals, types and signs of abuse, and tactics to use to help prevent abuse before it starts.

\*<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/How-safe-are-americans-with-disabilities-web.pdf>

## Risk Factors for Abuse

Those with I/DD possess several unique features that increase the potential for abuse and exploitation. These include:

### > Devaluation

People with disabilities can be seen as “less than” so abusers believe the mistreatment is acceptable.

### > Presumed Lack of Credibility

Abusers assume the victim will not be believed and, therefore, that they will not get caught

### > Isolation and Segregation

Violence can thrive behind closed doors and many individuals with I/DD live more solitary existences.

### > Increased Exposure to Potential Abusers

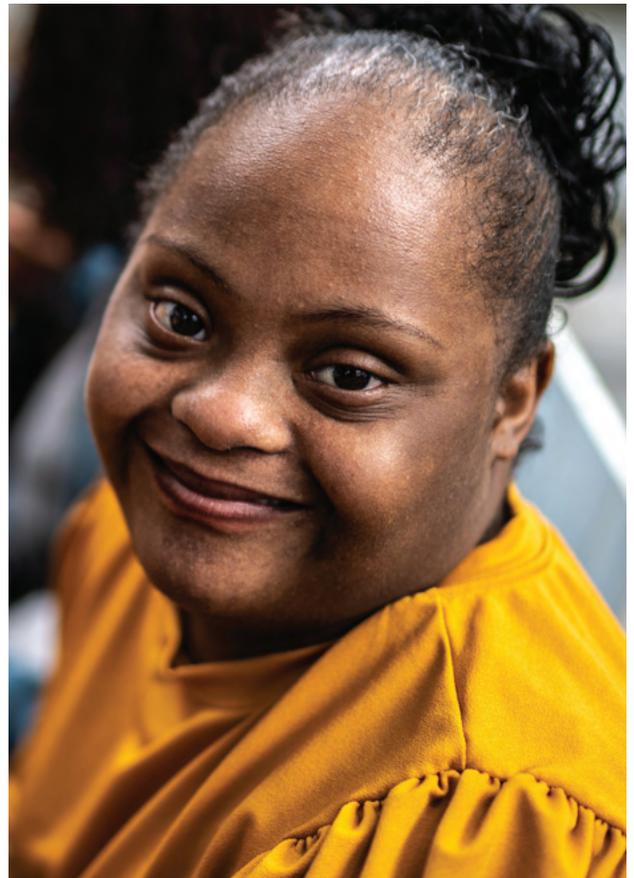
Relatives, family members, and those most involved in the lives of I/DD individuals on a daily basis as caregivers are common perpetrators.

### > Culture of Compliance

Some I/DD individuals are taught to comply with directions, so do not object even when such instructions may result in harm.

### > Seen as Easy Targets

Some abusers perceive disabled individuals as susceptible to manipulation and control, presenting easy opportunities for inappropriate actions.



Many of these risk factors also exacerbate the unfortunate fact that many crimes against people with disabilities go unreported, resulting in fewer abusers charged with the crime and even fewer convictions.

### > Reasons Crimes against the Disabled go Unreported:

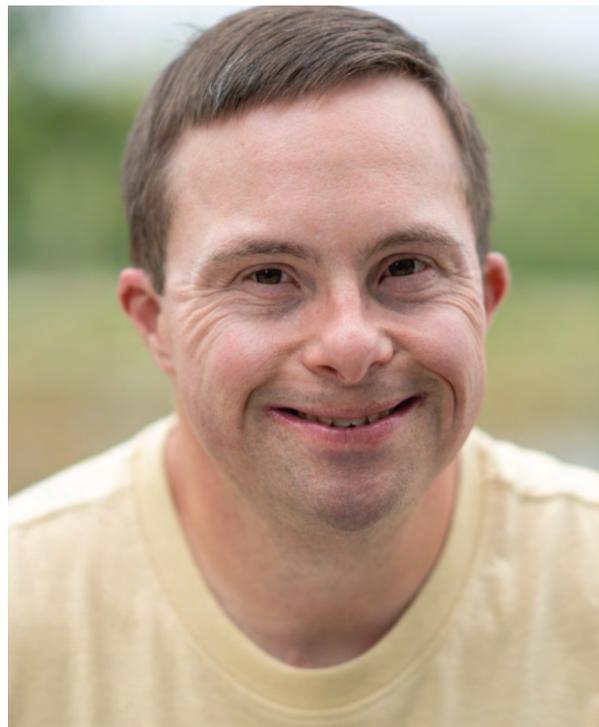
- Silence feels safer, or at least, less harmful
- Loss of independence and fear of institutionalization
- Lack of knowledge about healthy sexuality and safety
- Lack of effective criminal justice response

**47% of violent crimes reported to police, 22% of people charged with an offense, and 9% people convicted of a crime\***

### > Types and Signs of Abuse

Abuse is described as anything that causes harm to an individual. Persons with I/DD are susceptible to different forms of abuse including:

- **Physical Abuse:** Intentionally causing a person pain or injury
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing someone to have sex
- **Psychological/Emotional Abuse:** Behavior that takes away someone's dignity and self-worth
- **Economic/Financial Abuse:** Controlling another person's finances without permission
- **Neglect:** Caregivers do not meet the needs of the people they serve



\*<https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/How-safe-are-americans-with-disabilities-web.pdf>

## > Physical Indicators of Abuse

- Unexplained injuries, pain, or bruising
- Stained, torn, or missing clothes
- Changes in sexual behavior
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Over-sedation

## > Behavioral Indicators of Abuse

- Behavioral extremes like hyperactivity or mood swings
- Unusual fear of a particular person
- Avoidance of specific settings
- Depression or withdrawal
- Disturbances in sleeping or eating
- Self-destructive behavior



## 7 Ways Staff Can Help Prevent Abuse

Despite the greater risk for abuse individuals with I/DD face, your staff can make a positive difference in limiting their exposure. The key is to educate staff and arm individuals with actions they can take to help combat abuse.

### Recommend your team:

- Encourage individuals to get involved in the community
- Help them function as much as possible on their own
- Provide those with I/DD more control over their life and let them make more decisions
- Educate these individuals about their rights
- Listen to and believe accounts of abuse
- Understand how to follow up on claims and take action
- Know where to find resources to help abuse victims



**Given the prevalence of exploitation of the I/DD population, taking proactive steps to help protect these individuals is essential. Knowledge, vigilance, and follow-through will help your staff have an impact on the safety and well-being of those in your setting.**

Pharmacy Alternatives has the most expertise in the I/DD market and has been meeting the needs of individuals and agencies for over 30 years. We share your commitment to making a difference every day with closed-door pharmacy services for specialized populations delivered locally in all 50 states. Learn how our services and hands-on support can help you empower those you support to live life to the fullest.