The First Report:
*Victims and Families Speak Out*

National Center for Victims of Crime
Phoenix – September 9, 2013
Background on the Survey

• The need for the survey
• Developing questions
• Distribution throughout the nation
• Feedback from our consultants during the analysis phase
What We Knew Prior to the Survey

• Abuse of PWD is an epidemic

• PWD are much more likely to be victims

• Cases of abuse are under-reported

• Victims are not getting:
  • equal justice
  • equal services
This survey elicited responses from 7,289 people.
A wide variety of people took the survey.
Types of People Who Responded

- Parent or family member of a person with a disability: 36.2%
- Person with a disability: 18.1%
- Advocate: 17.9%
- Administrator/manager of an organization providing services or support: 16.0%
- Concerned Citizen: 8.2%
- Direct support worker: 7.1%
- Mental Health Professional: 6.9%
- Social Worker in the field of disabilities: 6.5%
- Public agency employee: 5.5%
This “First Report” primarily focuses on 2,560 responses of victims and their families.
Overview of Key Findings
Abuse is prevalent and pervasive

- Over 70% of respondents with disabilities were victims of abuse.
- 63% of parents/family said their loved one was abused.
It happens in many ways

- 87% emotional and verbal abuse
- 51% physical abuse
- 42% sexual abuse
- 32% financial abuse
It happens frequently

- 90% of victims suffered abuse on multiple occasions
- 57% more than 20 times
- 46% too many times to count
Failure to report abuse

• Nearly half of victims did not report abuse to authorities.

• Most thought it would be futile to do so.
Inadequate Response

• 54% of those who did report, said nothing happened.

• In fewer than 10% of reported cases were perpetrators arrested.
83% of victims who got therapy said it was helpful.

But . . .

66% of victims were not referred to a therapist.
Fewer than 10% of victims of sexual or physical abuse received benefits from a crime victim program.
Recommendations

Reduce Risk

Improve Reporting

Improve Prosecution

Improve Therapy for Victims

Improve Victim Compensation
Reduce Risk

Step 1: 
Admit that abuse occurs

Step 2: 
Know who likely offenders are

Step 3: 
Create a risk reduction plan
Improve Prosecution

First Responders and Investigators: Need special training

Prosecutors:
Learn “best practices” of other agencies

APS/CPS
Send personnel to conferences with workshops on abuse and disability
Improve Therapy for Victims

Need more trauma therapists with skills in treating victims with disabilities

Need better referral systems by professional associations

Need better coordination between VOC programs and professional association referral systems
Improve Victim Compensation

Improve rate of reporting to police

Train police to refer victims to VOC programs

Service providers should tell abuse victims about the right to compensation if they report the abuse
This is just the tip of the iceberg

Learn More

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Take Action

spectruminstitute.org