

Increasing Access and Implementing Accommodations:

Considerations for Working with
Survivors and Survivors with
Developmental Disabilities

Thursday, July 17, 2025

11:00am - 12:30pm

**C.A.
LEADDs**

**A ValorUS[®] and
Arc of California Project**

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Presenters



Ashleigh Klein-Jimenez
Director of Prevention
VALOR



Priscilla Klassen
Project Coordinator
VALOR



Jordan Lindsey
Executive Director
The Arc of California



Elizabeth Grigsby
Client Advocate
The Arc of California

Objectives

- Describe various accommodations and how they are utilized
- Analyze current policy and barriers to services
- Construct intake policies & procedures that will maximize survivor access

Use the Text Chat feature
to answer the question.

Text Chat

What accommodations
does your organization
currently offer?

Why Accommodations?

Why is abuse of survivors with Developmental Disabilities (DD) less likely to be reported?

- Fear of not being believed
- Relationship to abuser
- Lack of support

Why are survivors with DD less likely to receive services and supports?

- Barriers in law enforcement and legal system
- Disability service providers lack awareness of victim advocacy services
- Victim service organizations lack capacity

Survivors might choose not to disclose a disability because:

- Their disability has been a central part of their abuse
- Their credibility and knowledge has been discounted in the past when they disclosed their disability
- They were discriminated against, excluded, faced stigma, or verbal/emotional abuse due to their disability
- They received unequal treatment due to their disability

Use the Text Chat feature
to answer the question.

Text Chat

What accommodations
does your organization
currently offer?

Barriers and Accommodations

Physical Access

- Wheelchair access
- Grab bars in restroom
- Flexibility in where to meet
- Grab bars in shower
- Shower Seat
- Lower Bed
- Lift
- Bed Rails
- Adjustable Height Bed
- Designated, accessible parking



Physical & Structural Considerations

- Are there accessible public transportation options?
- Are the entrances, parking, meeting areas, restrooms, and seating areas accessible and easy to find?
- Do you have flexible seating arrangements?
- Are SART rooms and beds able to accommodate different bodies?
- Is there enough space for wheelchairs, support persons, and interpreters?
- Gait challenges
- Motor skill challenges

REMINDER

Do not touch or
move someone's
accessibility device



Interpreters

- Primary or preferred language
- Sign language
- Protactile
- Use professionals, in-person

Technology

- Access to Video Phone
- Amplification Systems
- Captioning phones & apps

Sign Language

Is a translator and/or ASL interpreter needed?

- ASL ≠ Written English
- Captioning
- Lip Reading
- Deaf Interpreters



Communication Accommodations

- Alternative or Augmentative Communication Devices (AAC)
- Incorporate visual aids
- “Real-time captioning” or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Services
- Talk to text features
- Offer information in a variety of formats for different learning styles: text, images, auditory, videos



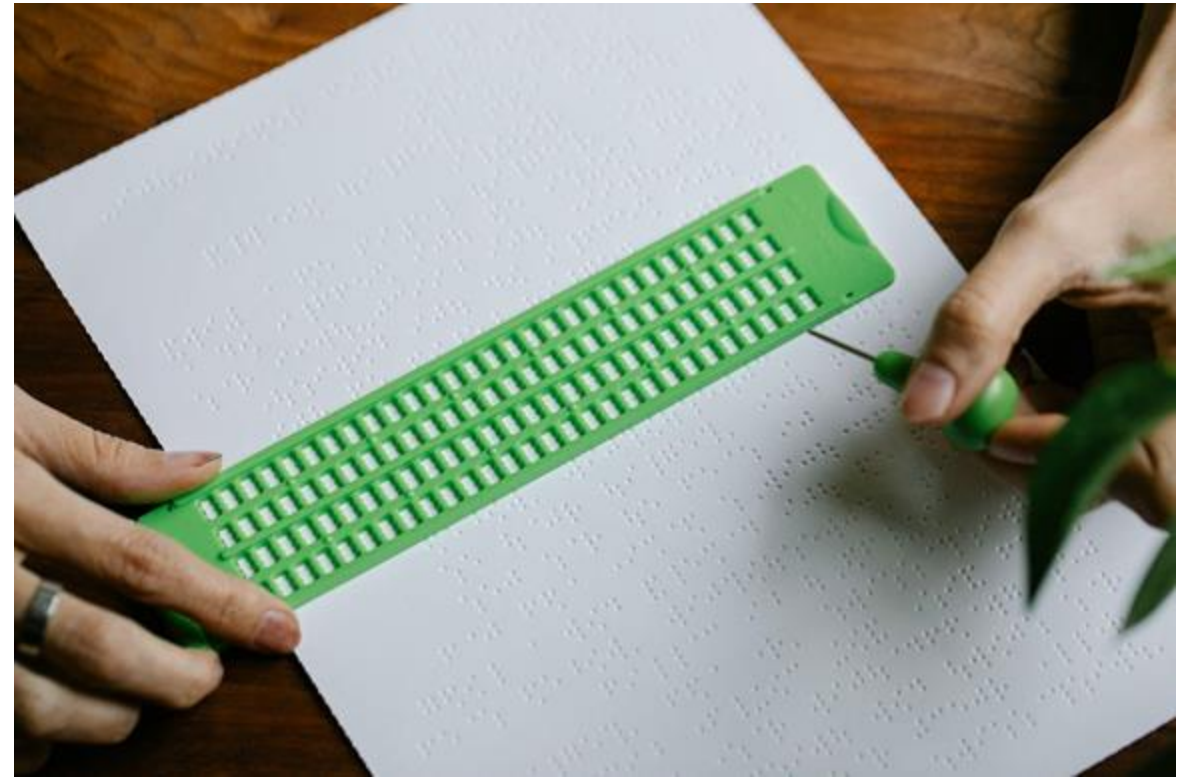
Communication Accommodations, cont.

- Allowing more time to speak
- Reading documentation to the participant
- Written checklists (are they safe to take home?)



Accommodations - Written Information

- Translation in your primary or preferred language
- Assistance with reading, writing, or filling out forms
- Large print, magnifiers
- Print outs on alternative colored paper (e.g., yellow/green offers high contrast)
- Alternative spacing on documents
- Braille
- Audio
- Screen reader



Communicating with Survivors with DD

- Always speak to the survivor and include them
- Use age appropriate plain language (breasts vs. boobies/chichis)
- People may process information differently, especially depending on the way the information is presented
- If someone struggles with perception of time, you can orient them by using use common scheduled activities
- Ask if it would be helpful for you to rephrase yourself



Communicating with Survivors with DD

- Concentrate
- Be patient
- Try to eliminate distractions
- Take breaks
- Check your face & body
- Consider writing as an alternative means of communicating
- Communication facilitator



Communicating with Survivors with DD

- Ask one question at a time
- Pause after asking questions
- Try to avoid Yes or No and Why questions
- Be aware of people pleasing and repeating back
- If you are unsure what someone needs or what they are doing, it's okay to ask politely
- Ask them to repeat themselves



Accommodations - Personal Care Assistants

- Accompany survivors while on site
- Assist with activities of daily living (e.g., eating, dressing, using the toilet, getting into or out of a chair or bed, functional mobility, personal device care, personal hygiene care)
- Some people require 24/7 assistance and their support person should be allowed 24/7 access



Service Animals

You may ask:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

You are *not* allowed to:

- Request any documentation that the dog is registered, licensed, or certified as a service animal
- Require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability



Animal Policy Considerations

- Do you have a policy about service and support animals?
- How do you determine if a support animal will be allowed?
- What do you do if a staff member is allergic to a service animal?
- What if someone has a fear or phobia of the service animal?
- Do you have a protocol for cleaning up and assisting with care for a service animal when needed?



Accommodations - Lighting

- Natural light
- Low or dim lighting
- Non-fluorescent lighting
- Reduced window glare
- Wearing sunglasses in rooms that cannot be dimly lit



Accommodations - Sensory/Stimulation

- Earplugs or noise-muffling headphones
- Stim or fidget toys (e.g., something to shake, something to squeeze, something to spin, something to watch, something that lights-up)
- Weighted vests or blankets
- Alternative seating (e.g., exercise ball, stand-up desk, floor mat)
- Advanced warning of loud noises like bells, or planned fire alarms



Sensory Considerations

- Are spaces sensory over-stimulating?
- Are there varied lighting options?
- Is there somewhere you can meet that is quiet, has less distractions?
- Do you have noise cancelling headphones or soundmachines?
- Could you provide stim/fidget toys/devices?
- Do you have a safe space if someone gets overwhelmed?
- Is there a comfort item that will help the person feel more at ease?

Accommodations - Comfort

- Varied seating options
- Reduced noise and/or distractions
- Preference of staff gender
- Quiet or “safe room” to use for calming
- Clear view of door or exit
- Shades or curtains closed/open
- Room with no windows
- Prefer not to have the door open/closed
- Prefer not to sit with back toward the door
- Sensitivity to chemicals or specific smells



Accommodations - Timing of Sessions



Modify length of sessions

Modify frequency of sessions



Access Policy Considerations

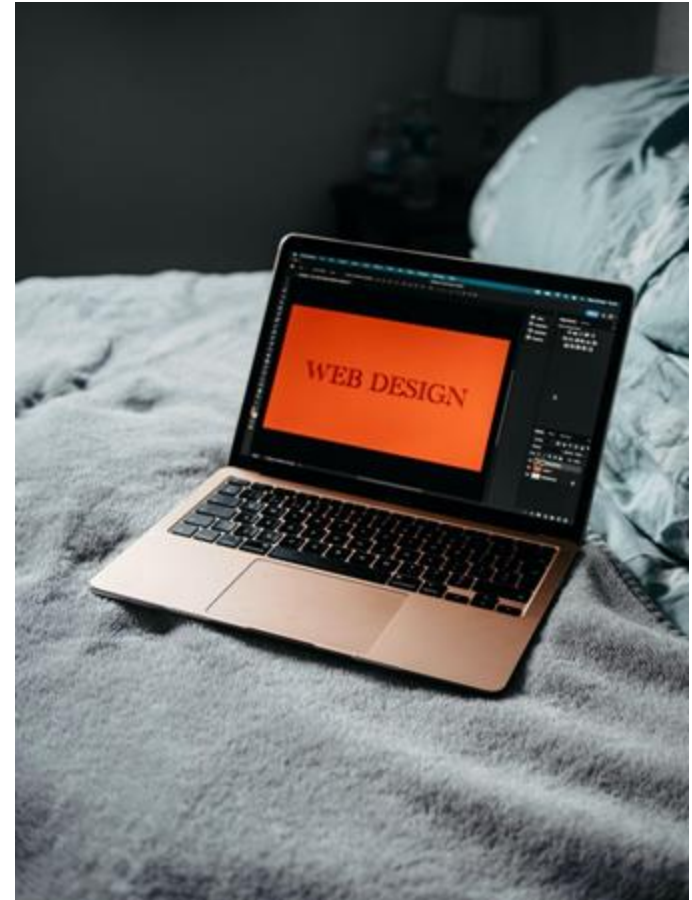
Hotline

- Do you have a text or online chat function?
- Do you immediately hang up if no one responds?
- Are your hotline workers familiar with video relay services?



Making your Website Accessible

- Is your website is setup to work with screen readers and has image descriptions (alt text)?
- Do you have a quick escape/fast exit button?
- If your website has images of people, are there images of people with disabilities?
- Is it in plain language?
- Do you have captioning and transcripts of audio and video?



Making your Printed Materials Accessible

- Use plain language
- Use accessible fonts & colors
- Consider adding images
- Have large print versions
- Braille version
- Consider ASL versions
- Be willing to discuss it, or assist someone through it



Meetings

- Is a translator or ASL interpreter needed?
- Can you orient the person to the space in advance if needed?
- Is there enough space for wheelchairs, support person, ASL interpreters?
- Can the chairs fit people of varied body sizes?
- Have you considered people's sensory needs/challenges?
- If there are materials or a powerpoint, have you offered to provide them in advance?
- Do you offer breaks? Can the person stim or pace if needed?
- Can the meeting be scheduled so that it doesn't interfere with the person's routines, if they have them?

Additional Tips

- Prepare in advance
- Plan for more time
- Break it down
- Provide information in different formats
- Offer to send reminders



Access Policy Creation

Purpose of an Accommodations Policy

- Decrease barriers to accessing support and advocacy services
- Ensure equitable access to services
- Create inclusive and affirming environments

Crafting a Policy

- In what ways can you commit to increasing access?
- Who will the policy cover?
- What timeline can survivors expect?
- Are there any accommodations that you cannot provide?
- Do you have funding?

Model Accommodations Policy



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Model Accommodations
Policy for Survivors &
Survivors with Intellectual &
Developmental Disabilities

Intake Policies & Procedures

Sample Intake Form



A ValorUS[®] and
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Sample Intake Accommodations Form for Survivors & Survivors with I/DD

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Intake Procedure

What is your current intake procedure?

- What forms?
- What identifying info?
- Is it necessary/ mandatory?

Do you have an accommodation policy?

Do your policies take Covid into consideration?



Sample Intake Accommodations Form

“Before we begin the intake paperwork, I am going to ask you some questions about what would be helpful for you as we work together. If you have any questions or concerns, please stop me at any point.”

In order to participate in services do you need:

- An ASL or other sign language interpreter?
- A spoken language interpreter? Which language?
- Materials in large print or braille?
- Support staff to join?

Are there things that would make you more comfortable here?

- Fidget items?
- No overhead lighting
- White noise
- Soft music
- Limited scents
- Private room (if available)
- Other

Would it be helpful if I:

- Read forms to you?
- Filled out paperwork for you?
- Added numbers or notes into your phone?
- Offered breaks? How often?

Are there things I can do to help make sure you can access meetings or appointments?

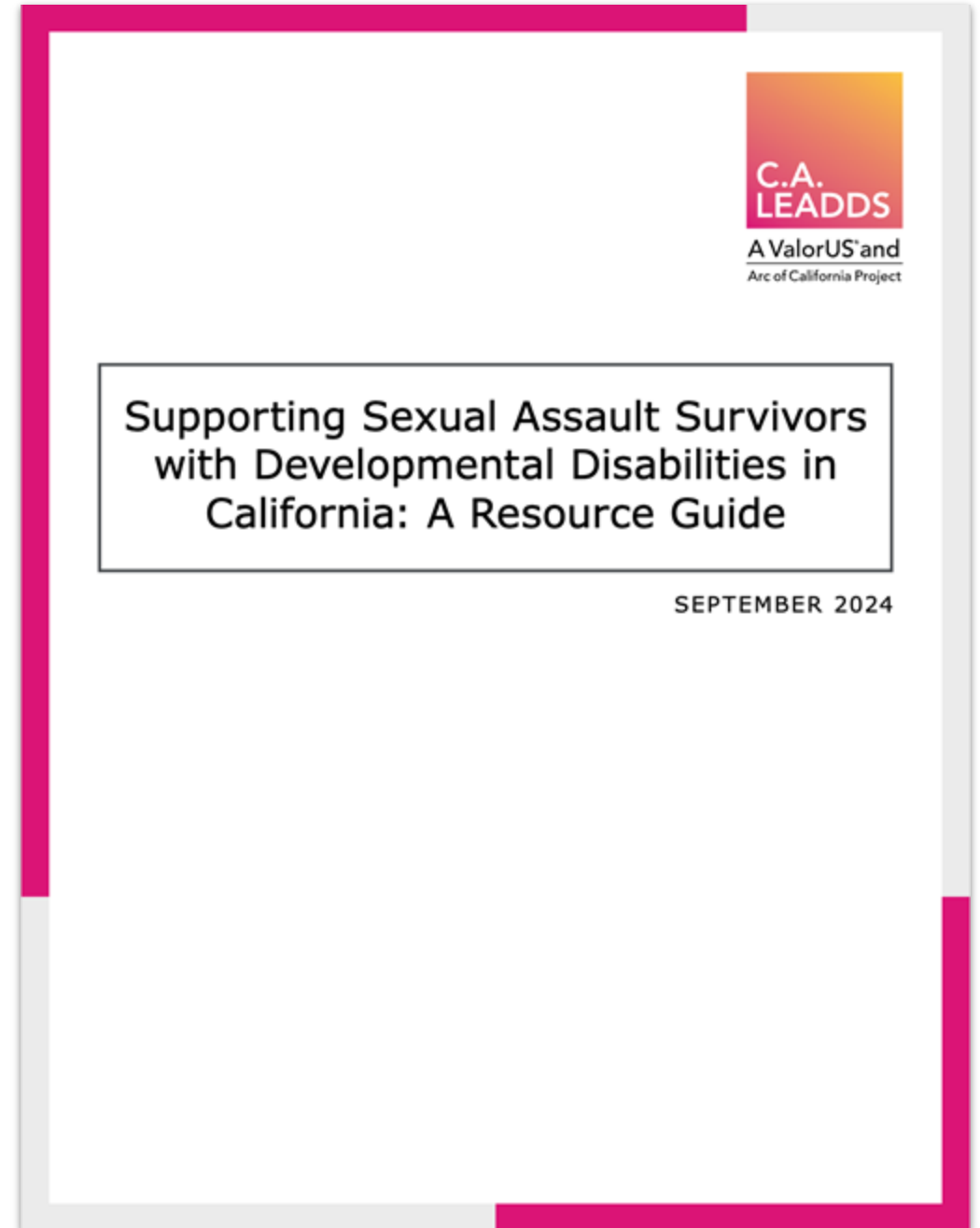
Do you have any other ideas about what could help you today or with any future meetings?

Intake Forms

- Ask everyone if they need accommodations or assistance
- Offer to fill out/assist with forms for everyone
- Some people might want/need assistance reading or understanding instructions



Resources



Questions?





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