



# Sexual Violence and People with Disabilities: **What It Is & What We Can Do About It**

Middlesex County  
Department of Public Safety and Health  
Office of Health Services

Jeffrey W. Anthony, CHES  
Center for Empowerment





# Sensitivity and Self-Care

We will be talking about sensitive topics,  
so let's take care of ourselves.



**1-877-665-7273**



# Who are we?

- The Center for Empowerment is the state designated Sexual Violence Program for Middlesex County
- We strive to support and empower survivors and significant others affected by sexual violence, and to help eliminate all forms of sexual violence through community awareness and education



# Center for Empowerment

- 24-hour hotline (1-877-665-7273)
- 24-hour advocacy (currently virtual)
- All services are free and confidential
- Individual counseling for survivors & loved ones
  - Available in Spanish
- Case Management and Referral
- Support groups
  - Male survivor group
  - Adult survivors of sexual assault or child sexual abuse
  - Art & alternative therapy groups
- Informative client workshops
- Prevention Education and Coalition
- Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate training





# Center for Empowerment

The Center serves ALL survivors of any kind of sexual violence. Our services are available:

- Regardless of when the assault occurred
- Whether or not the survivor has decided to report
- To loved ones and non-offending parents

Counseling can be provided to survivors ages 13 and up, as well as to those who speak Spanish.



# What We Will Talk About Together:



- Defining sexual violence
- How persons with disabilities are impacted by sexual violence
- Implicit biases & isms as risk factors
- Prevention, Survivor Support, and moving forward
  - Partners in Justice

# Sexual Violence



- Any form of unwanted, unwelcome, forceful or coercive sexual behavior including but not limited to:

- Sexual Harassment
- Stalking
- Voyeurism
- Lewdness
- Sexual Contact



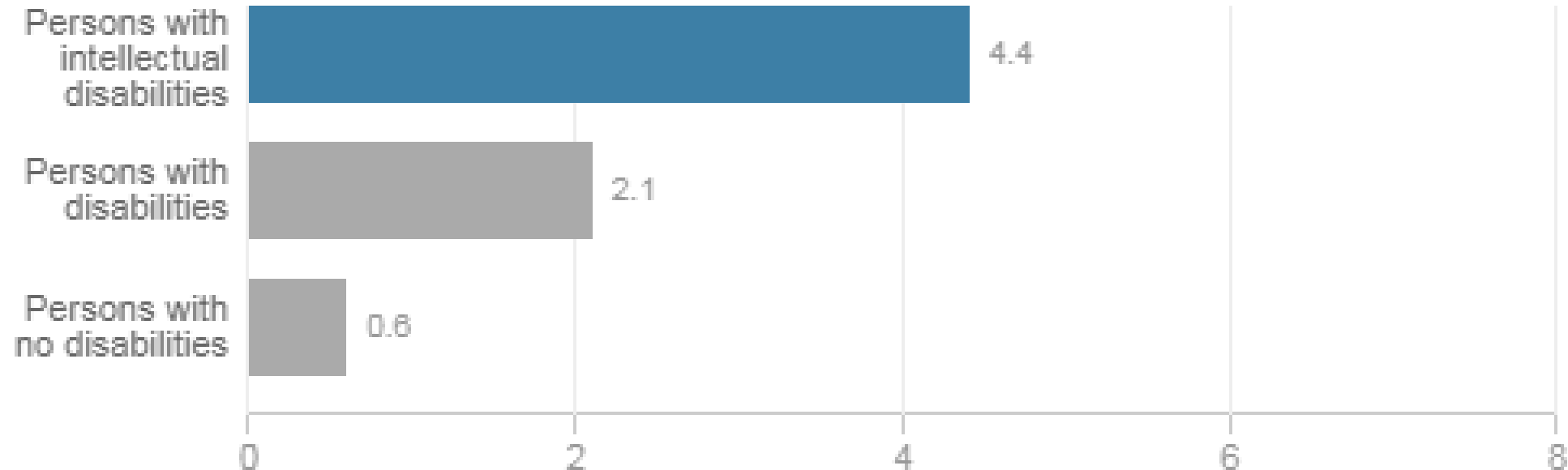
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Assault
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Trafficking

# Sexual Assault Rates Among People With Intellectual Disabilities, 2011-2015



The rate of rape and sexual assault against people with intellectual disabilities is more than seven times the rate against people without disabilities. Among women with intellectual disabilities, it is about 12 times the rate.

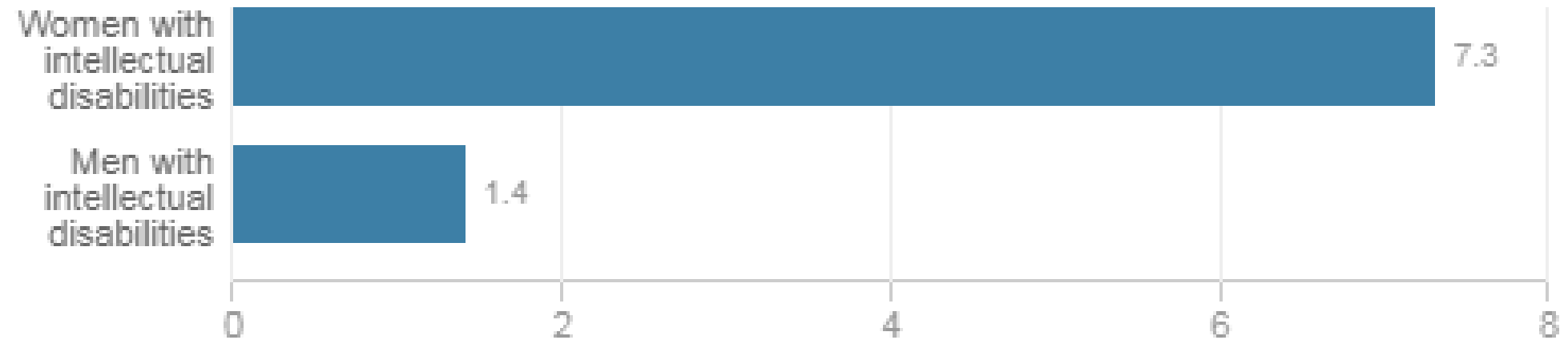
## RATE PER 1,000 PEOPLE







## RATE PER 1,000 PEOPLE WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, BY GENDER



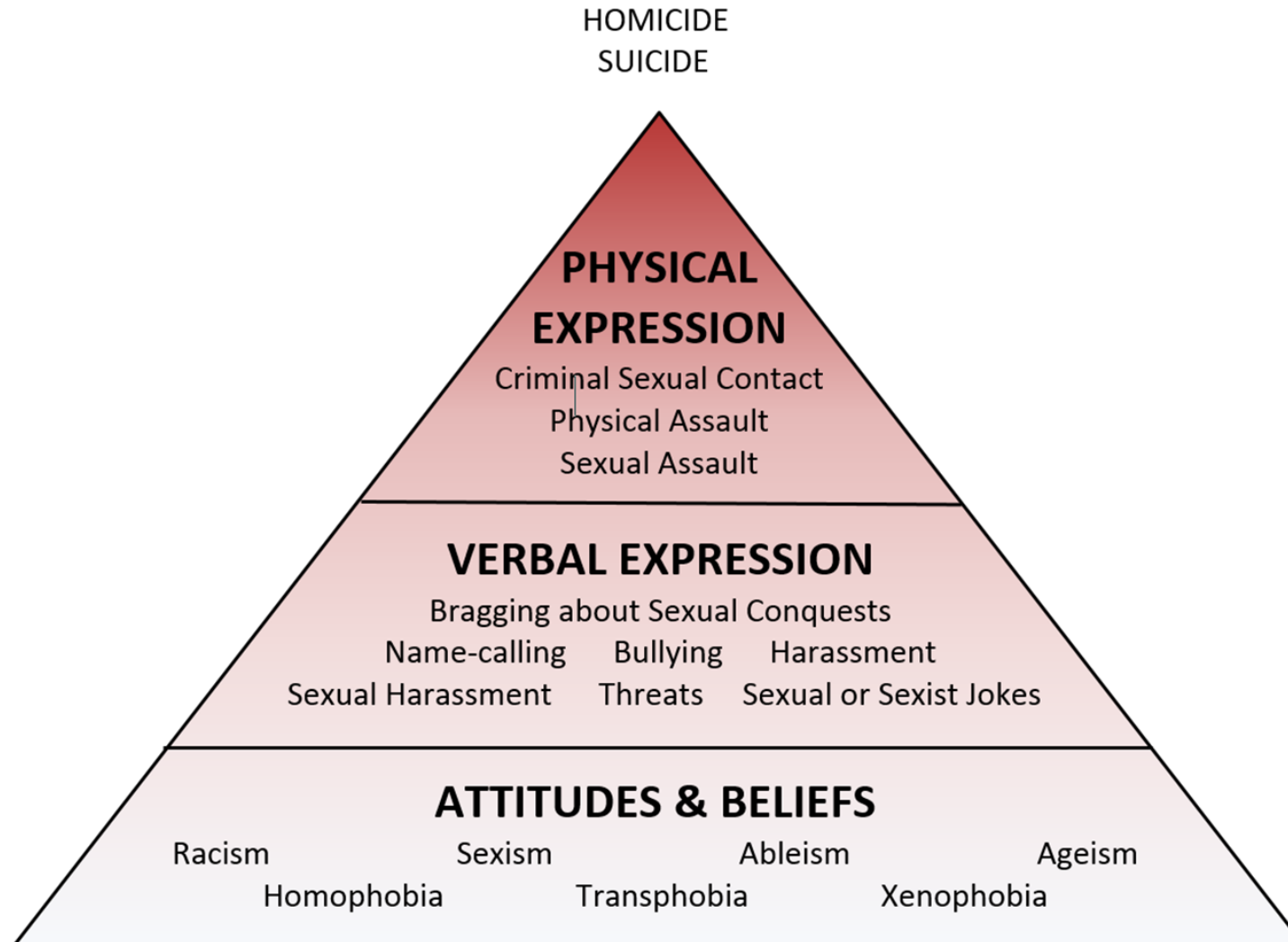
### Notes

Based on the noninstitutionalized U.S. residential population age 12 or older

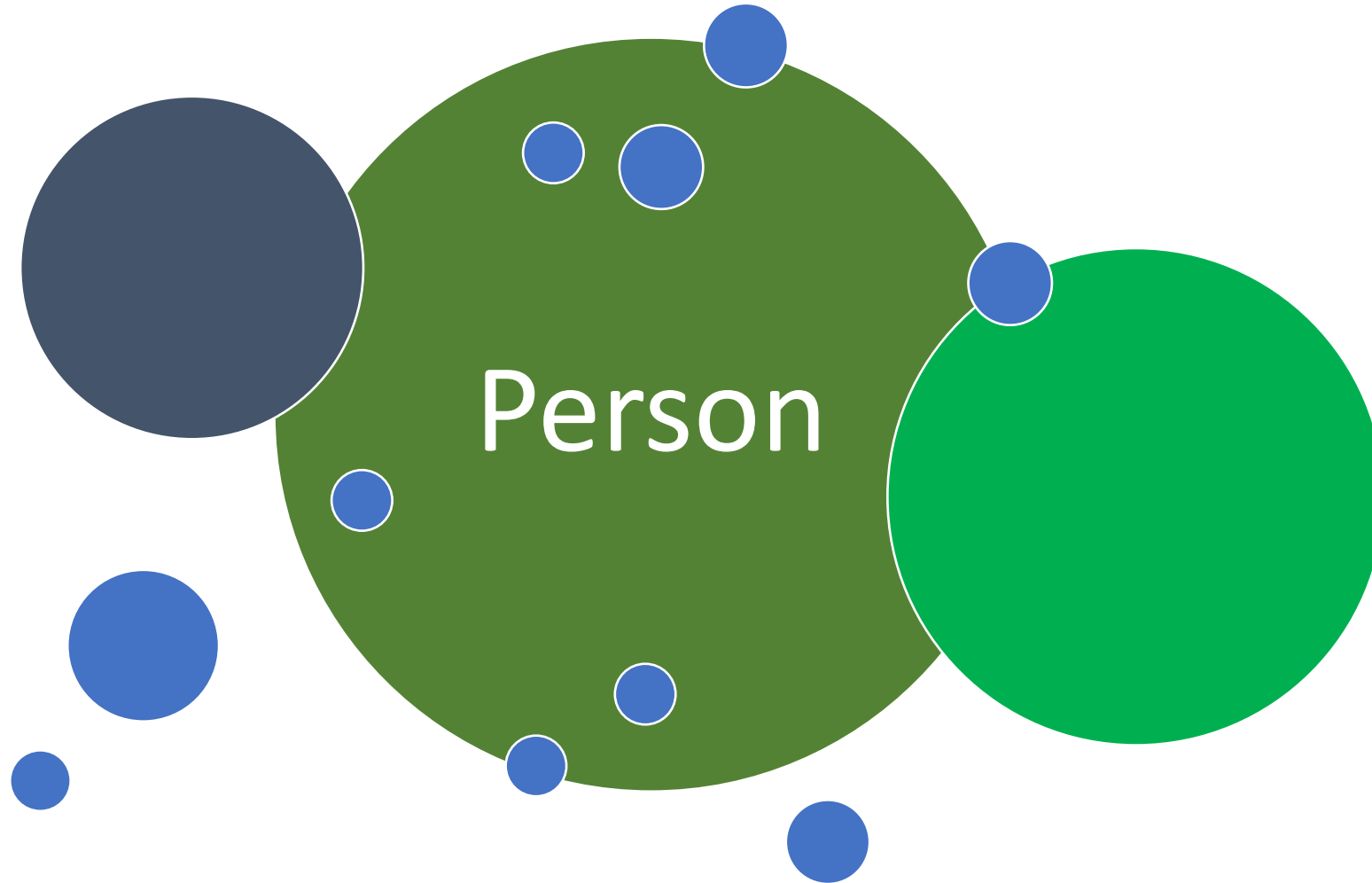
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, Special Tabulation

Credit: Katie Park/NPR

# Pyramid of Violence



# The Parts that Make us Who We Are



# Implicit Bias: A barrier to care



- Implicit biases are **pervasive** - everyone possesses them.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**.
- The associations we hold **do not necessarily align with declared beliefs** or stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, but we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. The associations we have formed can be gradually unlearned.



# Reasons Abuse is Not Reported

- Loss of home, job, services and/or friends
- Not being believed
- Taught to be compliant
- Not knowing rights or how to identify abuse
- Convinced “It was my fault”
- Fear of more abuse or being blamed
- Lack of response:
  - Abuse that happens in programs is often treated as an employment issue, and NOT reported

Source: [https://arcnjorg.presencehost.net/file\\_download/inline/c6c449e3-5024-4236-ba6c-ad71999e9099](https://arcnjorg.presencehost.net/file_download/inline/c6c449e3-5024-4236-ba6c-ad71999e9099)



# How Do We Shift the Culture?

- Can a person with a disability be a sexual being?
- Can a person with a disability consent for themselves?
- Is a person with a disability capable of intimacy?
- If you do not think so, how might that impact people?



# Defining Prevention

- Prevention of perpetration vs. victimization
- Promoting social norms that protect against violence
- Teach skills to prevent perpetration of sexual violence
- Providing opportunities to empower and support
- Creating protective environments
- Support survivors/victims to lessen harms

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/prevention.html>

# What Does Supporting Survivors Look Like?



- Start by believing
- Providing options
- Allowing survivor to have as much or little control as they want
- Accessibility of services



# Moving Forward



- Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. and the Department of Justice, Office on Violence against Women
- Partners in Justice
- New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking
- Robert Wood Johnson Rutgers University Medical School – Human Sexuality Course
- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital – REACH Program



# Resources

- <https://www.aasect.org/referral-directory>
- <http://www.findingyourindividuality.com/>
  - Individual & group counseling services
  - Client & family centered educational workshops
- Sex Positive Families [www.sexpositivefamilies.com](http://www.sexpositivefamilies.com), IG @sexpositive\_families
- The “Nonnie Talks About...” book series by Dr. Mary Jo Podgurski
- Breaking the Hush Factor: 10 Rules for Talking with Teens, Dr. Karen Rayne
- American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists
  - <https://www.aasect.org/referral-directory>

Thank you!



 **MIDDLESEX**

**C O U N T Y • N J**

**CENTER FOR EMPOWERMENT**

SEXUAL VIOLENCE COUNSELING, ADVOCACY,  
AND PREVENTION EDUCATION

**1-877-665-7273**

[empowerment@co.middlesex.nj.us](mailto:empowerment@co.middlesex.nj.us)



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