



What Is Gender-Based Violence?

A Plain Language Guide for
People with Intellectual Disabilities

See Our Companion Guide for Anti-violence Service Providers:
Inclusion in Practice: Helping People With Intellectual Disabilities
Experiencing Gender-Based Violence

Created by Disability Alliance BC, with Inclusion BC and
Ending Violence Association of BC
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About the Project Partners



Disability Alliance BC's mission is to support people, with all disabilities, to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community. DABC champions issues impacting the lives of people with disabilities through our direct services, community partnerships, advocacy, projects, research, and publications.

<https://disabilityalliancebc.org/>



Inclusion BC is a federation working with partners to build community and to enhance the lives of children, youth, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, by building awareness, inspiring action and advancing rights, responsibilities and social justice.

Inclusion BC provides support, education and advocacy where and when it's needed. They advocate at a systems level for policy change and promote inclusion through public awareness initiatives and campaigns.

<https://inclusionbc.org/>



EVA BC works to coordinate and support the work of victim-serving and other anti-violence programs in British Columbia through the provision of issue-based consultation and analysis, resource development, training, research and education. Its work is guided by respect for difference, human dignity and equality.

<https://endingviolence.org/>

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Chapter 1: What Is Gender-based Violence?

Who is this Guide for?

This guide is for anyone with an intellectual disability who has had gender-based violence done to them. Gender-based violence is any violence against someone because of their gender.

Everyone has the right to express their gender and be safe from violence. But some people get hurt more often because of their gender. This is wrong.

We would like to talk with you about gender-based violence. And most importantly we want you to know who you can go to for help if this kind of violence happens to you.

Everyone has the right to express their gender and be safe from violence.



What is Gender?

- The most common genders are masculine and feminine (man/woman or boy/girl).
- Gender is about how you know yourself to be. It's about what you feel like on the inside.
- A person's gender doesn't always match the sex (male/female body parts) that they're born with.
 - For example, a person who is born a male (with male body parts) might later know they are a woman. Their gender is female. This person is called transgender because their sex is different from their gender.
- Some people are born intersex. This means they are born with body parts that are not clearly male or female.

Some genders experience violence more often than others.

- Women and girls. People who were born with female body parts.
- Transgender. People who know they are a different gender than the sex they were born with.
- Non-binary. People who do not call themselves a man or a woman.
- Two Spirit. This is used in some Indigenous nations. Two Spirit people may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (called LGBTQ). It can also mean belonging to both the masculine and feminine spirit. The meaning is not the same in all Indigenous nations.
- People who are one of the genders we just talked about and also have a disability are more likely to experience violence. People who are one of these genders and are an Indigenous, Black or person of colour (called IBPOC), or are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or queer, experience more violence too.

There are different kinds of gender-based violence. It can be:

- **Intimate partner violence.** This is violence by someone like a husband or girlfriend. We talk about this in [Chapter 3: Relationships and Consent](#).
- **Sexual assault.** We talk about this in [Chapter 2: What is Sexual Assault?](#)
- **Emotional abuse.** We talk about this in [Chapter 3: Relationships and Consent](#).
- **Financial abuse.** This is when someone steals or takes control of your money and doesn't let you decide how to spend it.
- **Sexual harassment.** This is unwanted sexual behaviour toward you. It can be written or things someone says, or it can be actions that are sexual.
- **Technological violence.** This is when someone uses technology (like email, texts, Facebook, GPS tracking software) to control or bother you.



Chapter 2 - What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is a very serious kind of gender-based violence.

Sexual assault is any sexual touching or behaviour that happens to you that you don't want. It could be:

- ✗ Kissing you don't want
- ✗ Sexual touching you don't want, or
- ✗ Sex you don't want.

You always have the right to say NO or YES to sexual activity.



When you say YES to the sexual touching or behaviour that is called "consent." Then it is not sexual assault.

If you do not consent, then it is sexual assault. You can learn more about what consent means later in this Chapter.

- People of all ages can be sexually assaulted.
- Sexual assaults can happen anywhere. It can happen in your home, at school, at work or at church.
- It may have happened a long time ago or recently. Or it could be happening now.



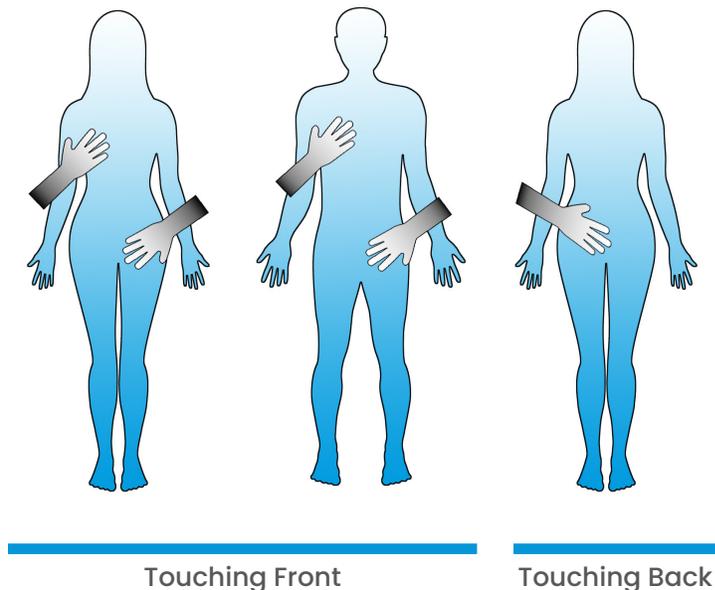
Sexual Assault is a Crime

No one has the right to force you, trick you or scare you into sexual contact or behaviour with them. That is a crime.

What is Sexual Touching?

Sexual touching is when someone touches, grabs or rubs your private parts or gets you to touch theirs. Your private parts are the areas around your penis, vagina, bum or breasts.

Sexual touching also includes anything that happens to your private parts, like oral sex (touching someone's private parts with your mouth) or using objects to touch your private parts.



Some Questions People Ask About Sexual Assault

My boyfriend made me have sex when I didn't want to. Was it still sexual assault?

Yes. You have the right to say NO at any time, to anyone. Relationships should make you feel safe and respected.

People who do sexual assault can be a girlfriend, boyfriend, partner, spouse, friend, acquaintance, or stranger.

What if I didn't say NO or try to fight back?

It doesn't matter if you didn't fight back or say NO. It is still sexual assault if you did not want the contact.

Everyone responds to sexual assault in a different way. This does not mean that you wanted the sexual assault to happen .

- ✓ You may be too scared or nervous to say NO or fight back.
- ✓ You may be confused because the person was someone you trusted.

It is also a crime for someone to have sexual contact with you:

- ✗ If you are asleep,
- ✗ If you are knocked out, or
- ✗ If you have had a lot of drugs or alcohol and don't know what is happening.

Who Commits Sexual Assault?

There is no way to tell before who will sexually assault someone. Usually people are sexually assaulted by someone they know.

It could be a neighbour, a friend or relative, a boyfriend or girlfriend, caregiver, employer, or a stranger.

What Does Consent Mean?

You are in charge of your own body. You have the right to decide what kind of sexual activity you want to do. You always have the right to say NO or YES to sexual activity.

What is Sexual Activity?

- ✓ Kissing
- ✓ Sexual touching
- ✓ Sex

What is Consent?

Sexual activity without both people's consent is wrong. Sexual activity with their consent is OK.

- ✓ Consent means that you want to do something. It means that you are totally sure you want to.
- ✓ Consent means both people understand what is happening and both people want it.
- ✓ You have the right to give consent and you have the right to NOT give consent.
- ✓ Consent means you feel like you have a real choice.
 - It is not a real choice if you say YES because you are scared to say NO. That is not consent.
 - It is not consent if you are forced, tricked or threatened.

What is a “Real” Choice?

Sometimes sexual assault is done with physical force. Other times, it happens when someone forces you or tricks you into doing something you don't want to.

If you only say YES to sexual activity because you have been pressured or tricked, then it is not consent. You did not have a “real” choice.

Here are a few reasons why someone might have said YES to sexual activity, even if they didn't want to:

- "I was scared of making him mad."
- "I didn't understand what was happening."
- "I was scared of her leaving and then I wouldn't have any support."
- "I felt guilty because they said they were depressed and if I had sex with them they would feel better."
- "He was the boss, so I thought I had to."
- "My partner said he would break up with me if I didn't do it."

What Happens When There is no Consent?

Consent is very important. It is called sexual assault if you do not consent to any type of sexual activity. And it is against the law.

Consent is Feeling...	Consent is Not Feeling...
✓ Willing	✗ Pressured
✓ Sure	✗ Confused
✓ Comfortable	✗ Scared
✓ Sober (not drunk or high)	✗ Drunk or high
✓ Respected	✗ Disrespected

When Do You Need to Get Consent?

Consent should happen every time, for every type of sexual activity.

- Both people must give and get consent for every sexual activity.
- You can say NO or STOP to anything, at any time.
- Just because you said YES to one thing, doesn't mean you agree to other kinds of sexual activity after that.

Can Someone Give Consent for me?

No. Only you can give consent. No one, not even a parent, friend or caregiver can give consent for you. You are the only person in charge of your body.

When Someone Uses Power Against You

Many people with disabilities need support from others, like help cooking meals, help with money or help understanding things. You have the right to this support.

This help puts that supporting person in a powerful position. Sometimes it's hard for the person with a disability to say NO to that person.

This is one of the reasons that people with disabilities are sexually assaulted more often than others. It is because people take advantage of their power.

It is called sexual assault if the person you need help from has sexual activity with you.

This is wrong and if it happens to you, you can tell someone. It is not your fault.

Some people who might have this power are:

- Caregiver
- Support worker
- Homeshare provider
- Employer
- Teacher
- Coach
- Bus driver or taxi driver

Both people must give and get consent for every sexual activity.



Chapter 3 : Relationships and Consent

You always have the right to say YES or NO to sexual activity, even if you are in a relationship.

Just because you have agreed to be in a relationship with someone, doesn't mean you have agreed to sexual activity any time they want to.

Relationships should make you feel safe.



- ✓ The police can charge anyone with a crime who forces sexual activity on you. This is sexual assault.
- ✓ It does not matter if the person who forced you is your boyfriend, husband or your date.
- ✓ Partners in a relationship still need to get and give consent.

Intimate Partner Violence

What is Intimate Partner Violence?

- Intimate partner violence is when your romantic partner (boyfriend or girlfriend, husband or wife) hurts you. It could be the partner you have now or an ex-partner.
- Every relationship is different and intimate partner violence doesn't always look the same.
- The violence could be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or financial.
- Intimate partner violence happens in lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer, transgender, non-binary and straight relationships.
- Relationships should make you feel safe. If you don't feel safe in a relationship, tell someone you trust.

Different Kinds of Intimate Partner Violence

Emotional Abuse is:

- ✗ Name-calling and other ways to put you down
- ✗ Threatening you
- ✗ Telling lies about you
- ✗ Stalking or harassing. This is when someone follows you or bothers you so much that you feel unsafe.
- ✗ Manipulation. This is doing sneaky or bad things to control you or take advantage of you.
- ✗ Isolation. This is keeping you away from other people or activities.
- ✗ Confinement. This is not letting you leave a room, house or building.
- ✗ Property damage. This is destroying or stealing your stuff.
- ✗ Cyber bullying. This is saying bad things to you or about you online, through Facebook, Twitter, email or other online places.

Physical Violence is when:

- ✗ Things are thrown at you
- ✗ Someone scares you with a weapon
- ✗ You are slapped, kicked, pushed or pulled
- ✗ You are hit or beaten
- ✗ Your hair is pulled, or
- ✗ You are choked

Sexual violence is:

- ✗ Any sexual contact that you do not want
- ✗ When you are assaulted or someone says they will sexually assault you

Chapter 4: How to Get Help

If you have been sexually assaulted or if you are being hurt by your partner, there are people who can help you. You can choose what kind of help you want and who you want to tell about what happened.

You can choose the kind of help you want and who you want to tell about what happened.



Tell Someone You Trust

This could be:

- ✓ A family member
- ✓ Support worker
- ✓ Friend
- ✓ Advocate

Tell Someone in Your Community

Or, you may want to call someone in your community to help you.

- ✓ If you are in urgent need of help, call 9-1-1 right away.
- ✓ If you want to tell the police, see [Chapter 5: Reporting Sexual Assault to Police](#).
- ✓ Read about the community groups who can support you in [Chapter 6: Other Places to Get Help](#).
- ✓ Find the phone numbers, emails or websites for these groups in [Chapter 7: How to Contact These Groups](#).

Make a Safety Plan

A friend, family member or support worker can help you make a safety plan. A safety plan is something you make before something bad happens. It will tell you what you have decided to do any time you feel unsafe.

Everyone's plan is different because everyone's situation is different. What is safe for one person may not be safe for another person.

But most safety plans are a list of things to do that can keep you safe from someone who is hurting you. Like your boyfriend is starting to be mean and you're scared to go home. Your safety plan will help you know what to do.

It is usually best to have someone you trust help you with the plan.

Put Your Safety First

Your safety is the most important thing. It can be very scary to try and get help. But remember:

- ✓ You are not alone. There are people who want to help you.
- ✓ You are not to blame for the violence.
- ✓ You are not responsible for anyone else's behaviour.

Who Should I Tell?

How do you decide who to tell? You can ask yourself these questions to help you choose the right person.

- ✓ Will this person listen to me?
- ✓ Will this person believe me?
- ✓ Who can help me understand my feelings?
- ✓ Who can give me information about the police and the courts?



You may want to tell different people for different reasons.

- ✓ A friend or family member can give you emotional support.
- ✓ An advocate is someone who can protect your rights and go with you to get help.
- ✓ You can choose a personal support team. This is more than one person so you have help in different ways.

You will probably need to talk about what happened when you get help. This can be very hard. You may feel upset and scared.

Remember:

- ✓ **You didn't do anything wrong.** No matter what you did or said, the person who hurt you is to blame.
- ✓ **You are doing the right thing.** It is very good that you told people that someone hurt you.
- ✓ **There are people who can help you.** There is a lot of help for people who have been assaulted.

Chapter 5: Reporting Sexual Assault to the Police

Sexual assault is a crime. It is against the law. You have the right to report it to the police.

- ✓ You can do this by phone or by going to a police station.
- ✓ You do not need a lawyer when you talk to the police.
- ✓ It is good to have someone you trust go with you.

If you don't feel safe, it is very important to tell police.



If You are Scared of the Person who Assaulted You

- You should contact the police right away if you or anyone you know is in danger from the person who assaulted you.
- Tell the police you are scared the person might hurt you again.
- The police can help you get a “no-contact order.” This means that the person who assaulted you is not allowed to come near you. They are also not allowed to talk to you.
- Your personal support person or team can also help you be safe.

If you don't feel safe, it is very important to tell the police.

What will Happen at the Police?

The police will ask you questions about what happened.

- You may need help communicating with police or understanding what's happening. This is called an accommodation.
- You can ask for a sign language interpreter, a language translator or a support person to help you communicate.

Police-based Victim Service Programs

The police may tell you about a victim services support worker who works with the police department. The support worker will talk to you and find out what kind of help you need or want.

The police victim services support worker will help you soon after you talk to the police. They may tell you about Community-based Victim Services where you can get more help.

Chapter 6: Other Places to Get Help

Community-based Victim Services Programs

Community-based Victim Services are programs that help people who have experienced sexual assault or who are being hurt by their partner.

These programs are for all victims/survivors, even if you choose not to tell the police.

Staff at these places understand what it's like to experience an assault. They can help you get through it.

Staff at these places understand what it's like to experience an assault.



What will Happen at Victim Services

- ✓ You can bring an advocate or someone you trust with you.
- ✓ The worker will listen to you and keep your personal information private.
- ✓ You will tell the support worker what happened and you will need to fill out forms.
- ✓ The support worker and your advocate can help you fill out the forms, but the information has to be in your own words.
- ✓ The worker will explain the choices you have to report the assault or ways to keep you safe if you are being hurt.

Here are other ways Victim Services can Help You:

- ✓ Go with you to the police.
- ✓ Help you understand the court system and go with you to court.
- ✓ Help you get other supports or services like counselling, benefits or safe housing.
- ✓ Help you get the medical care you need.

Find a Community-based Victim Services Program

You can find a Community-based Victim Services program near you by calling VictimLink BC or by using their website. You can see their phone number and web address in [Chapter 7: How to Contact These Groups](#).

Community Living Agency

- If you have an intellectual disability and receive services from a community living agency, you can tell your support worker or staff at the agency about what happened to you.
- Staff at the agency can support you to get help.

What will Happen at a Community Living Agency

- Your support worker will tell a manager. They will talk with you about what happened and write it in a report. This report will go into your personal file.
- The agency will file something called a “critical incident report” which will be sent to Community Living BC.
- The manager or your support worker will talk to you about what you want to do next.
- They can go with you to the police, take you to a doctor, help you tell your family or get counselling, or go with you to Victim Services.

Community Living BC

Community Living BC (CLBC) is the government program that pays for and watches over services for people with intellectual disabilities.

CLBC is responsible for responding to and investigating when a person who is eligible for CLBC reports abuse or an assault.

- The 5 regional health authorities across the province are responsible for responding to and investigating reports of abuse and assaults for everyone else.

What will happen at CLBC

- When you report the assault to CLBC, a staff person will speak with you about what happened. They will talk to you about what will happen next and ask what you want to do.
- CLBC will look at what happened and make sure you are safe so it doesn't happen again. They will help you get medical attention if you need it.
- CLBC has to tell the police when a crime is committed. An assault is a crime.
- CLBC will offer you support and assistance.
- CLBC will work with you and can support you to:
 - Contact the police
 - Get help from Victim Services
 - Get counselling
 - See a doctor or other health care provider
 - Get support from a community living agency

Advocacy Organizations

A disability advocacy organization can help you find services or go with you to other places to get help.

They will help make sure that your rights are respected and that you get the support you need.

You can call the organization or email them. These services are free.

What will Happen at an Advocacy Organization

- Advocates will ask you what kind of help you need.
- You do not need to share the details of your assault, but they will need to know if you have been assaulted so they know how to help you.

Chapter 7: How to Contact These Groups

We have talked about a lot of places and organizations that can help you. You can find the phone numbers, emails and websites for them in this Chapter. Click on the underlined email or website addresses below to open your email program or go to the website.

All of these groups are here to help you.



Police

If you are in urgent need of help, call 9-1-1 right away.

Go to this website to find the phone number for a police station where you live:

 <https://www.ecomm911.ca/non-emergency-calls/find-your-local-non-emergency-numbers/>

Community Living BC

Find the CLBC office near you at this phone number and website.

 **Toll-free: 1-877-660-2522** Website: communityliving.bc.ca

VictimLink BC

VictimLink BC is a free telephone help-line and email. You can call, text or email any time of day or night, and someone will talk to you and help you. It is confidential which means they will keep your information private.

VictimLinkBC can tell you who to contact for more help, like a local victim service program, transition house program (shelter), or violence against women counselling or outreach program.

These free programs are in communities across the province.

 **Toll-free: 1-800-563-0808** Text: 604-836-6381 Tty: 604-875-0885
Email: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca Website: <http://endingviolence.org>

Here's how to find victim services near where you live.

1. Go to this page on the Ending Violence Association of BC website:
<http://endingviolence.org/need-help/services/>
2. Go to where it says, "Search services" on the page.
3. Click on "Search by Region" and choose the place where you live from the list of places.
4. Click on "Search by Program" and choose "Community-based Victim Services."
5. Then click the yellow "Search" button. You will see the name and phone number of victim services offices near you.
6. The picture below shows what this looks like, if you choose "Okanagan" in "Search by Region" and "Community-based Victim Services" in "Search by Program."

Find a Service

Contact information for Community-Based Victim Services, Stopping the Violence Counselling and Stopping the Violence / Multicultural Outreach Programs in British Columbia can be searched on this page.

For information on Transition Houses, Safe Homes and Second Stage Housing in British Columbia, visit [BC Housing](#) for a current directory of available programs.

If you are in immediate **DANGER** or fear for your safety, please **CALL 911**. If you are not in immediate danger, call [VictimLink BC](#) at 1-800-563-0808 for information about all services that are available throughout BC.

Search services

Search Entries:

Search by region:

Search by program:

Organization is EVA BC Member Organization is Not EVA BC Member

SEARCH

Important COVID-19 Updates from EVA BC

Find a Service

Types of Violence and Abuse

Know the Warning Signs

Safety Planning

Creating Safer Workplaces

PREVENTION PROGRAMS

NEED HELP?

TRAINING

Battered Women's Support Services Crisis Line

You can call this crisis line any time, day or night, if violence is happening in your relationship.

You can call the crisis line during a safe time if you need to make a plan to leave the relationship.

 **Text 604-652-1867 Email: intake@bwss.org**

Disability Advocates and Resources

Disability Alliance BC

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) has made help sheets and videos for people who have had crimes done to them, including sexual assault.

 **You can see all the help sheets here: <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/category/publications/anti-violence-resources/>**

 **You can see all the videos here: <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/how-i-need-to-know-videos/>**

Inclusion BC

Inclusion BC has a free advocacy helpline for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

You can talk to an advocate on the phone or you can email. This person will help you find support and services in the community where you live.

 **Toll-free: 1-844-488-4321 Email: advocacy@inclusionbc.org
Website: <https://inclusionbc.org/>**

Family Support Institute

The Family Support Institute of BC supports families who have a family member with a disability. This is a free service to any family, living anywhere in the province.

Someone in your family who is helping you can call the Family Support Institute if you have been assaulted.

 **Toll Free: 1-800-441-5403 Website: <https://familysupportbc.com/>**

Indigenous Resources

Indian Residential School Survivors Society

This Society gives information, counselling, traditional healing and support for residential school survivors.

 **Toll-free: 1-800-721-0066 Website: www.irsss.ca
24-hour National Survivors Support Line: 1-866-925-4419**

Warriors Against Violence Society

Warriors Against Violence Society has men's groups, women's groups, co-ed groups, youth groups, one-on-one counselling and couple's counselling to help with family violence.

 **Phone: (604) 255-3240 Website: www.wavbc.com**

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

BCAAFC is the main organization for the 24 Friendship Centres in BC that provide services to Aboriginal communities in cities.

 **Phone: (250) 388-5522 Website: www.bcaafc.com**

LGBTQIA+ Resources

QMUNITY

QMUNITY provides a safe space for LGBTQ people. They provide counseling, information and referrals, and peer-to-peer support.

 **Toll free: 1-800-566-1170 Email: reception@qmunity.ca**

Other Services

Legal Services Society

You can contact the Legal Services Society for information on legal services that might help you.

 **Toll-free: 1-866-577-2525 Website: www.lss.bc.ca**

Health Services

You can call 811 to reach HealthLinkBC if you need help advice. You will be able to speak with a nurse or pharmacist any time of day or night, every day of the year.

 **Dial 811 Website: www.healthlinkbc.ca**

Crime Victim Assistance Program

The Crime Victim Assistance Program provides medical expenses, counselling services, income support and other benefits to help victims of crime and their close family members to recover from the effects of crime. You need to be eligible to get these services.

 **Toll free: 1-866-660-3888**
Website: www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/financial

Find More Information Here

You can read the information below to learn more about what to do and where to find help. Click on the underlined text below to see the information on the internet.

- You can read more information about what to do if you have been sexually assaulted in the help sheet: *I've Been Sexually Assaulted: Who Can I Tell?* (written by Disability Alliance BC)

 https://disabilityalliancebc.org/helpsheet_sexassault_whocanitell_final/

- You can read more about what happens when you go to the police in the help sheet: *How to Report a Crime to the Police.* (written by Disability Alliance BC)

 <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/ev-hs-police/>

- Your support worker can help you make a safety plan. Or, you can ask a friend or family member to help you make your plan.

Remember. There are a lot of places you can find help.

