



## LEARNING TOOLS

1. [Supporter Resource: Assault Prevention Newsletter](#)
2. [Supporter Resource: Assault Prevention Article](#)
3. [Supporter Resource: Training Outline for Assault Prevention](#)
4. [Supporter Resource: Assault Prevention Knowledge Check](#)
5. [Self-Advocate Resource: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan](#)
6. [Self-Advocate Resource: How to Defend Yourself - Fighting Back!](#)
7. [Self-Advocate Resource: Fighting Back Video\\*](#)

*\*Not available in this packet. Please visit the DDS SafetyNet to watch these videos.*

## GENERAL INFORMATION

SafetyNet Learning Tools are designed to assist in providing information on a specific topic and to be used in a variety of learning environments. These Learning Tools can be used during one-on-one conversations with an individual, or with small and larger groups. Before beginning a learning session, the presenter should review all SafetyNet Learning Tools on the topic. The trainer can find additional material within the links provided on the SafetyNet Article and Newsletter.

## BEFORE THE TRAINING

The presenter should:

- Arrange adequate time and comfortable space for the training and discussion.
- Arrange for any equipment needed, such as a laptop and projector.
- Set up necessary equipment.
- Print or photocopy enough materials for each individual to have their own copy.

## TRAINING

The presenter:

- Shows videos.
- Leads discussion of content and encourages open communication.
- Reviews and discusses information on each of the handouts.
- Asks questions to check for understanding.
- Follows up with additional review and discussion as needed.
- Provide training in multiple sessions to assure adequate coverage and understanding of the topic.



## Assault Prevention — Supporter Newsletter

As a supporter, you are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of the people you support. It is important as a supporter to stop and prevent violence against the people you support.

Data shows that:

- The rate of violence against people with developmental disabilities is nearly three times higher than for those without a disability.
- Individuals with a cognitive (intellectual) disability have a rate of violent victimization higher than any other type of disability.
- In California, over half of reported incidents of abuse (July 2014 – June 2016) were cases of physical violence.

Your personal commitment to the provision of a safe, stable, and nurturing environment is essential and must be very visible. Protection of the people you support starts with your leadership which is demonstrated through the quality of your interactions with the individuals you support.

### Why are individuals with developmental disabilities susceptible to abuse?

Individuals with developmental disabilities are more susceptible to abuse for many reasons. Some of these reasons are that they:

- May have limited communication abilities and/or cognitive disabilities that make it difficult to report abuse.
- May be seen by the abuser as weak, vulnerable, or less likely to report abuse, making them easy targets.
- May be more likely to be abused by someone they know – a caregiver or someone involved in their daily routine.
- May be easily influenced by and eager to please others, thinking that the abuser is a “friend.”
- May think that how they have been treated is normal.



### What are signs that may indicate that an individual is being harmed by someone?

Some physical signs are:

- Bruises
- Cuts
- Scrapes
- Other injuries

Some behavioral signs are:

- Concealing injuries
- Having a questionable explanation for injuries
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Spending a lot of money or often having little money
- Having low self-esteem
- Having sudden changes in behavior
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Using drugs
- Showing symptoms of depression and/or suicidal tendencies

These signs may indicate possible harm to an individual. Any of these may be a reason for concern even if it is not related to an individual being harmed.

For more information on reporting abuse, go to:  
[http://www.dds.ca.gov/DSPT/Student/StudentYear1\\_3.pdf](http://www.dds.ca.gov/DSPT/Student/StudentYear1_3.pdf)



## Assault Prevention — Supporter Newsletter — continued

### What can you do to prevent or stop an individual from being harmed?<sup>1,2</sup>

*To prepare for violent situations with an individual:*

1. **Go over Tip Sheet: How to Defend Yourself—Fighting Back!** with the individual to prepare them for a potentially violent situation.
2. **Create an assault prevention plan using Tip Sheet: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan.** With the individual you support, make a plan of steps to prevent assault and to get out of violent situations. Examples of ideas to include in the plan are below:
  - Always know where the exits are.
  - Never go into a room alone with someone you don't know.
  - Make sure you have your phone in case you need to call for help.
  - If you can't leave the building, lock yourself in a safe room and then call for help.

*To identify and approach an individual who has experienced violence and to prevent it from reoccurring:*

3. **Watch for the signs** that an individual is being harmed.
4. **Talk to the individual one-on-one and encourage open communication** if you suspect that they are being harmed. When approaching the individual, it is essential to create a non-judgmental environment where the individual may feel more comfortable talking to you. Often people do not report because they do not think others will believe them.
5. **Provide care and support for victims of violence.** Often abuse goes unreported because victims fear the abuser will be in a position to do more

harm. Offer your help and provide resources and solutions to the individual.

6. If there has been a physical or verbal attack, **make sure the person is safe.** Look at what has happened and take necessary steps to prevent future violence.

*To de-escalate a potentially violent situation between an individual and another person:*

7. **Intervene** in a potentially violent interaction between an individual and another person by:
  - **Distracting:** Ask questions to divert attention of either the individual or other person. Examples include asking for directions, the time, help, etc.
  - **Directly approaching the situation:** Approach either the individual or other person and express your concern. When approaching the individual, show your support and offer your help. Be careful of escalating the situation when approaching the other person. They could direct their violence toward you or other people.
  - **Delegating:** If you do not know the individual or other person, ask for help from other people, such as security guards, police, other supporters, etc., who may be more helpful and appropriate for resolving the situation.



For more resources on **assault prevention** for the people you support, go to: <http://ddssafety.net/safety/assault-prevention>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.icadvinc.org/prevention/for-bystanders/intervening-to-prevent-violence/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.wikihow.com/Deal-With-a-Violent-Person>





## Assault Prevention: Supporter Article

Individuals with disabilities are more likely to become victims of assault than are individuals without disabilities. As a supporter of individuals with disabilities, it is important to learn how to recognize and prevent assault.



Assault is an unlawful attack or attempted attack, typically accomplished through force or violence, that can result in injury. Assault can be physical, verbal, or sexual.

Your responsibility as a supporter is to ensure the health and safety of the individuals you support. By learning how to recognize the signs of assault and prevent assault from occurring, you can keep the individuals you support, and yourself, safe from harm.

### 7 things you can do to recognize and prevent assault

**1. Talk about it.**

Have a conversation with the individuals you support about assault. The best way to stay safe is to be informed and educated on assault prevention.

**2. Avoid dangerous situations.**

It is always best for you and the individuals you support to avoid situations in which you could become victims of assault. Always be aware of your surroundings. Do not go to unsafe or unfamiliar destinations. Avoid walking alone or in small groups at night. Stay in well-lit areas and do not stop to talk to strangers.

**3. Know what assault looks like.**

Realizing that an assault is occurring can be obvious in some situations and more difficult in others. Physical assault can involve, but is not limited to, shaking, pushing, beating, kicking, and punching in order to hurt someone. Verbal assault can include threatening, taunting, yelling, and aggressively using words to intimidate, attack, or offend someone. Sexual assault includes rape, groping, and any other unwanted or forced sexual acts.

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**4. Stop assault from happening.**

If you witness an individual you support being assaulted, do anything you can to stop the assault. Do not hesitate to act! Tell the attacker to stop. If that does not work, try to run to safety with the individual you support. If that is not possible, fight off the attacker and shout for help. Call 911 if you are able to.

**5. Report assault and seek appropriate help.**

Do not hesitate to report incidents of assault to the appropriate authorities. Contact the police to report an assault. If the assault occurred in a group home or other facility, inform the administrators. In certain cases, it may also be a good idea to seek medical attention.

**6. Recognize the signs that an assault has occurred.**

Even if you do not directly witness an assault occurring, you can still help by recognizing the signs of assault. Someone who has been physically assaulted may have pain, bumps, bruises, bleeding, or other injuries. Someone who has been verbally or sexually assaulted may have nightmares, seem distracted at times, have mood swings, experience a sudden change in behavior, or develop new fears about certain places or people.

**7. Comfort someone who has been victimized.**

If an individual you support has been assaulted, they will likely need support and comfort. Suffering from assault is a traumatic experience and as a supporter, you can be a listening ear, offer words of encouragement, and help the individual you support calm down and feel safe again.

There are many things you can do to recognize and prevent assault. Always try to avoid situations in which assault can occur. If you see an assault happening, try to stop it. If you know an assault has occurred, comfort the person who has been victimized and seek appropriate help.



## Training Outline for Assault Prevention

- Summary:** As a supporter, you are responsible for ensuring the safety of the people you support. This includes making sure they are safe from assault. The topic of assault prevention is especially important for individuals with disabilities.
- The rate of violence against people with developmental disabilities is nearly three times higher than for those without a disability.
  - Individuals with an intellectual disability have a rate of violent victimization higher than any other type of disability.
  - In California, over half of reported incidents of abuse (July 2014 – June 2016) were cases of physical violence.
- Purpose:** Help supporters talk to the individuals they support about how to prevent assault and how to defend themselves if threatened with an assault.
- Target Audience:** Supporters and the individuals you support
- Goals:** At the end of this session, participants should be able to:
- Identify 5 ways to stay safe
  - Recognize danger signs of potential harm
  - Describe an individual defense strategy for dealing with potential harm
- Materials Needed:** Depending on the method of presentation you select, you will need:
- Supplies:**
- Chart, poster paper, board, or something else to write on
  - Markers or pens
  - Handouts
  - Equipment to show materials on TV or monitor (if possible)
- SafetyNet Materials:**
- [Tip Sheet: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan](#)
  - [Tip Sheet: How to Defend Yourself – Fighting Back!](#)
  - [Worksheet: Assault Prevention Knowledge Check](#)
  - [Video: Fighting Back](#)
- Preparation:** Review all SafetyNet materials listed above. In addition, supporters should review the [Assault Prevention Newsletter](#) and [Supporter Article](#). Depending on the method or presentation you choose:
- Set-up equipment for presentation
  - Print out/photocopy Supporter and Individual materials
  - Print out/photocopy the Knowledge Check worksheet
- Presentation:** There are many ways to present this material, including:
- **Print the SafetyNet materials** and go through them as a group with discussion. End the session with the Assault Prevention



## Training Outline for Assault Prevention — continued

- Knowledge Check worksheet and a discussion of the answers.
- **Use a computer and a projector**, TV monitor, or monitor with an Internet connection to show **SafetyNet materials** (either downloaded onto your computer or directly on the website). End the session with the Assault Prevention Knowledge Check worksheet and a discussion of the answers.
- **Print the SafetyNet materials as handouts for self-study.** Each participant then completes the Assault Prevention Knowledge Check worksheet and discusses answers with other staff as a group.

### Note:

For some it may be better to provide for individual discussion of Learning Tools. Use your knowledge of individuals and their learning styles to make the decision of whether it is best for group or individual discussion. Additionally, if a participant shares an incident where they are being victimized, don't ignore it. Make immediate arrangements to talk further with the individual and help them get needed support.

### Suggested Activities For Sessions on Assault Prevention:

Start the discussion by asking people to talk about their everyday safety concerns across a variety of settings: when they are in the community, when they are at home, or wherever they are.

List the major themes from the discussion of the following items:

- Review the Tip Sheet: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan. Brainstorm things individuals can do to stay safe. Review the list of safety concerns and find solutions for each.
- At the end of the session, check for understanding. Ask each participant to name three things they can do to stay safe.

#### Fighting Back

Show the video, "Fighting Back". Review the Tip Sheet: How To Defend Yourself – Fighting Back! Talk about awareness of danger signs.

- Discuss things people can do to protect themselves. Review each method. Ask people to roleplay responses to danger signs.
- Share that as a very last resort of being attacked, a person can use his or her body to defend themselves. Watch video again to review different ways a person might fight back.
- At the end of the session, check for understanding. Ask participants to name danger signs. Ask individuals to describe or demonstrate three things they can do to fight back.





## Assault Prevention Knowledge Check

**1. Name five things you can do that will help if someone tries to hurt you:**

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.
- v.

**2. Outline your assault prevention plan:**

If someone tries to hurt me,

- I will \_\_\_\_\_.

If I want to avoid people who might try to hurt me,

- I will \_\_\_\_\_.

If I need to leave the room/area,

- I should \_\_\_\_\_.

If I can't leave the room/area,

- I should \_\_\_\_\_.

If I need help,

- I will call \_\_\_\_\_.





## **Potential Answers to Question #1**

- Make eye contact.
- Breathe and calm yourself.
- Focus on what to do to get to safety.
- Get help by:
  - Calling 911 and reporting to the police.
  - Talking to your landlord.
  - Getting help from an abuse prevention center.
- Surprise your attacker by:
  - Making noise.
  - Saying "No."
  - Walking or running away.
- Give 100% effort.
- Wait for a chance to get to safety.
- Defend yourself by physically fighting back.



## Tip Sheet: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan

It is important to be prepared and to stay safe in case someone ever tries to hurt you. Fill out the assault prevention plan on the next page on your own or with someone that supports you. Use the ten tips below to help you.

### Ten Tips for Your Assault Prevention Plan

1. Know where the exits are and how you can escape if someone tries to hurt you. If you cannot leave, try to find a safe place where you can lock the door and call for help.
2. Always have your phone with you if you have one or know where you can find a phone in case you need to call for help.
3. Know who to call when you need help. Examples include: your supporter, the police, a family member, a friend, etc.
4. Stay away from unsafe places like dark alleys or abandoned areas. Stay in well-lit areas.
5. Try to go places with a group, especially if you are going somewhere at night. If you must go somewhere alone, always let someone know where you are going and when you will get there so they can get help if something goes wrong.
6. Do not stop to talk to strangers.
7. Do not go into a room or get in a car alone with people you do not know.
8. Walk on the sidewalk facing traffic so you can prevent cars from following you.
9. Avoid walking near places where someone can hide, such as doorways and bushes.
10. Wear clothes and shoes that you can run and move freely in.



## Tip Sheet: How to Create an Assault Prevention Plan — continued

### Assault Prevention Plan Example

1. If someone tries to hurt me, I will *know where the exits are, have my phone so I can call for help, and yell for help if there are people around me.*
2. If I want to avoid people who might try to hurt me, I will *stay away from dark alleys and places where there are no people. I will not go into a room alone with people I do not know.*
3. If I need to leave the room/area, I should *run to the closest exit. I should look around for people who can help me or call someone who can help me.*
4. If I cannot leave the room/area, I should *lock myself in a safe room and call for help.*
5. If I need help, I will call *my supporter or the police.*

### Assault Prevention Plan

1. If someone tries to hurt me, what will I do to be safe?
  - I will \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If I want to avoid people who might try to hurt me, what will I do to stay safe?
  - I will \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If I need to leave the room/area, what should I do and where should I go?
  - I should \_\_\_\_\_.
4. If I can't leave the room/area, what should I do and where should I go?
  - I should \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If I need help, who should I call?
  - I will call \_\_\_\_\_.



## Tip Sheet: How to Defend Yourself — Fighting Back!

### Danger signs that you might be harmed or hurt

- Someone grabs, holds, pushes, slaps or hits you.
- Someone touches or kisses you without you saying it's okay.
- Someone yells, puts you down, or says hurtful things to you.



### Things that help

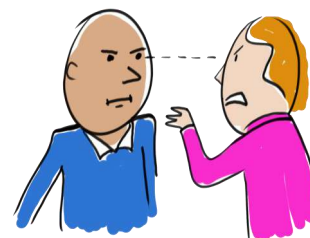
- **Make eye contact** — Look the attacker directly in the eye to say you are not afraid!
- **Breathe** — Take a deep breath and calm yourself.
- **Focus** — Focus on what to do to get to safety.
- **Get help** — Call 911, report it to the police, talk to your supporters, and/or get help from an abuse prevention center. Keep seeking help until you are safe.



### Defend yourself

Protect yourself when someone tries to hurt you. Here are some ways to defend yourself:

- **Surprise your attacker** — Don't be a quiet, passive victim. Surprise your attacker by making noise, saying "NO," and/or walking or running away.
- **Give 100% effort** — When you defend yourself, do one thing at a time and do it with 100% of everything you have whether you yell or run away.
- **If all else fails, wait** — Let the situation progress, plan, and wait for a chance to get to safety.
- **As a last resort, defend yourself by physically fighting back** — Use your body "defenders" — your elbow, your heel, your fist, your voice, and your head. A wheelchair or a cane can also be used as a defender.







## Tip Sheet: How to Defend Yourself — Fighting Back! — continued

To get away quickly,

1. Aim for a place on the attacker's body that will hurt a lot.
2. Look for a place on the body you can reach.
3. Distract the attacker so you can get to safety.

Some examples are included below:



- **Hit the attacker in between the ribs with your elbow.**



- **Use your heel to stomp on top of the attacker's foot.**



- **Use your fist to hit the attacker in the nose.**



- **Use your knee to hit the attacker in the groin.**



- **Use your heel to kick the attacker in the shin.**

- **Use your wheelchair to hit the attacker's legs.**



**When you defend yourself, do what you have to do to get to safety!**