



## 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.