

# People with Disabilities in Partner Relationships

Targets Disability with Physical and Sexual Abuse

## Coercion and Threats

Threatens to leave or to take children · Says will kill partner, children, pets or service animals · Threatens to have partner arrested or institutionalized  
· Forces use of alcohol or drugs on addicted partner  
· Makes partner steal or buy drugs

## Withhold Support or Treatment

Steals or throws away medication · Doesn't provide medicine or support when needed · Doesn't allow needed medical treatment  
· To increase dependence, breaks or does not let partner use assistive devices (phone, wheelchair, cane, walker, etc.)

## Emotional Abuse

Insults and shames about disability · Gives conflicting messages by both helping and hurting · Sneaks up to startle · Abuses more as partner becomes independent · Drives dangerously to scare · Disrespects boundaries · Talks down to partner  
· Torments by not letting partner sleep

## Privilege (Ableism)

Overprotects · Makes decisions alone · Creates physical barriers to getting around (moves furniture, leaves clutter) · Keeps tabs on partner for "safety" reasons because of disability · Takes over tasks to make partner more dependent

## Economic Abuse

Controls all money · Uses partner's disability income for self · Does not share expenses because being partner to person with a disability is a "favor"  
· Does not allow partner to work and be economically independent

## Power and Control

## Isolation

Pressures to give up disability services  
· Confines and restrains to restrict access to others · Exposes disability (AIDS, mental illness, etc.) to others to isolate  
· Limits contact with others  
· Threatens friends · Says no one else cares

## Sexual Abuse

Forces sex when partner unable to physically resist  
· Humiliates sexually because of disability · Makes decisions about birth control/pregnancy  
· Cheats and lies (does not think partner will know because of disability) · Pressures partner into prostitution

## Minimize, Deny and Blame

Lies about abuse to others (says partner is crazy, fell out of wheelchair, is forgetful, just didn't take medications) · Blames disability for abuse · Twists reality, says abuse did not happen

Targets Disability with Physical and Sexual Abuse

**SAFE** | stop abuse for everyone

A merger of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace

P.O. Box 19454, Austin, Texas 78760

Confidential, 24-hour SAFE hotline:

**512.267.SAFE (7233)**

For Deaf people of all identities, please use relay/VRS



Adapted with permission from  
DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT  
202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802  
218.722.2781 | theduluthmodel.org

Created by SAFE with in-depth input from  
people with disabilities.  
disabilityservices@safeaustin.org