

# Our Right to Safety and Respect

Guidelines for developing resources  
with women with disabilities about  
safety from violence and abuse



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# Foreword

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**Keran Howe** Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Victoria



There is growing recognition in Australia of the distinct needs and experiences of women with disabilities in violence prevention and response efforts. Research demonstrates that

women with disabilities are at significantly higher risk than other women of experiencing violence, of experiencing multiple types of abuse and experiencing abuse by more than one perpetrator.<sup>1</sup> Women with disabilities are also more likely to experience violence and abuse than men with disabilities. However, guidelines for the development of resources for women with disabilities about violence and abuse are lacking.

Good practice guidelines for the development of resources (including documents, videos, websites, apps and training sessions) that seek to prevent violence against women with disabilities are timely in the current disability and violence prevention policy contexts. There is an emphasis at both state and federal levels on recognising women with disabilities as a priority group in violence prevention, providing targeted, accessible information to people with disabilities and promoting cross-sector collaboration to address violence and abuse. Both the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* provide broader imperatives for organisations to ensure resources about violence and abuse are consistent with good practice.

There is firm agreement that all sectors and organisations in Australia are responsible for preventing and addressing violence against women. The diverse forms and settings of abuse experienced by women with disabilities further underscore this need.

Strong evidence also suggests that service providers would welcome guidance on how to develop inclusive violence prevention resources for women with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

*Our Right to Safety and Respect – Guidelines for developing resources with women with disabilities about safety from violence and abuse* provides guidance directly from women with disabilities.

It is important to acknowledge there are several elements to effective safeguarding in the context of violence and abuse of women with disabilities. These good practice guidelines focus on resources for women with disabilities to support them to recognise abuse, understand their rights and identify options for support. It is not intended to explore all necessary solutions to prevent or respond to violence against women with disabilities.

Several other steps must be taken at the personal, organisational and societal levels to ensure women with disabilities live free from abuse. However, it is hoped that the promotion and use of these good practice guidelines will support organisations' capacity building in violence prevention and contribute to a wealth of empowering, accessible information for women with disabilities.

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- 1 Lund, E (2011), 'Community-based services and interventions for adults with disabilities who have experienced interpersonal violence: A review of the literature', *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 12(4): 171–182. See also Powers, LE, et al (2009) 'Interpersonal violence and women with disabilities: Analysis of safety promoting behaviours', *Violence Against Women*, 15(9): 1040–1069 and S. Robinson-Wheelen et al (2014), 'A safety awareness program for women with diverse disabilities: A randomized controlled trial', *Violence Against Women*, 20(7): 846–868.
  - 2 Frawley, P & Anderson, S. *Adopting mainstream approaches: Taking account of and including people with an intellectual disability in violence and abuse prevention*, VicHealth Innovation Research Grant: 2014.

# Our lives, our safety, our voice, our expertise

“ Knowledge has no power unless you use it and share it. We'd like to make this world one worth surviving for!!!”

“ Make sure women know about their rights. Everyone deserves respect. Keep it short and simple – use easy English and pictures.”

“ A good future will be one where we have safe places to learn about our rights, to disclose, and to be supported.”







“ Violence and abuse against women with disabilities has gone on long enough and when you develop resources specifically for women with disabilities, in alternative formats, this is a win-win situation. Knowledge is power – a resource can enable women with disabilities to take back control.”



“ Despite our disabilities we have abilities and are able to fully contribute to this world. There should be avenues we can seek should we feel threatened. No one should be threatened by us and we should not be threatened by others.”

“ As a wheelchair user, I cannot convey strongly enough my need to feel safe, valued, listened to, respected and that my dignity is never compromised.”

“ Your organisation can help me and other women with disabilities by having educated and respectful staff. I mean really informed and respectful. A friendly, supportive demeanour doesn't go astray either!”

“ I would like organisations to see me as a capable person who relies on a wheelchair for mobility.”

# Acknowledgements

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Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) thanks Lydia Phillips Consulting for developing practice guidelines as part of the WDV Safeguards Project and also acknowledges the contribution and valuable oversight of Mary-Ann Robinson, Manager, Strategy, Policy and Research WDV, Jen Hargrave, Policy Officer WDV and Cath McNamara, Resource Development Officer WDV for organising and facilitating the engagement and participation of women with disabilities in consultations to provide feedback on the guidelines.

Many thanks to the 15 diverse women who took their valuable time to participate in individual and group consultations on the guidelines – you know who you are. We also thank our partners in informing the consultation plan and supporting the consultations to take place smoothly in their local areas – Theresa Stewart-Moore, Sally Camilleri and Mishelle from Women’s Health West, Joanne Bedford from City of Latrobe, Rhonda Joseph from Scope and Dean Dadson from the Self Advocacy Resource Unit.

A cross-sector Stage 1 Project Advisory Group provided significant expertise and guidance to the development of the guidelines. Membership comprised:

- Keran Howe, Executive Director WDV
- Mary-Ann Robinson and Jen Hargrave, WDV
- Samantha Dooley, Office of the Disability Services Commissioner
- Tess McCarthy and Emma Asscher, Office of the Public Advocate
- Jill Macqueen, Department of Health and Human Services

- Lucy Healey, University of Melbourne
- Margaret Camilleri, Federation University
- Hilary Johnson and Elizabeth Weston, Scope
- Claire Varley, Women’s Health Victoria.

Members’ enthusiasm, commitment and valuable insights through all stages of the development of the guidelines are much appreciated.

In addition to the Stage 1 Project Advisory Group, several professionals contributed their expertise and time to the development of the guidelines. Many thanks to Jan Ashford, Communication Rights Australia; Bianca Evans and Fofi Christou, WDV; Patsie Frawley, Deakin University; Dagmar Jenkins, South Eastern CASA; and Kerri Schroder, Jenny Visser and Laura Andrews, Safe Futures Foundation.

Thanks to WDV members and Stage 2 Project Advisory Group members advising on the development of a resource for women with disabilities on violence and rights to safety. In particular, thank you to Karleen Plunket, Lisa Brumtis and Stacey Christie for contributing their valuable time and expertise along with women who participated in the consultations to ensure the voice of women with disabilities is front and centre of these guidelines.

# How were these guidelines developed?

## Literature review and analysis

These guidelines have been developed based on an analysis of current relevant literature, input from a cross-sector project advisory group and consultations with subject matter experts (women with disabilities, the family violence, sexual assault, disability and academic sectors). We also documented existing Australian resources on violence and abuse that were specifically designed for women with disabilities and tested the guidelines' application to two existing WDV resources. A research and literature report, *WDV's Safeguards Project Phase 1 Final Report*, has been produced and can be located on the WDV website.

Australian and international research confirms that women with disabilities are at significant risk of experiencing violence and abuse, yet the evidence base on guidelines and interventions to prevent and respond to this abuse is notably lacking. A scan of existing Australian violence prevention resources identified few resources developed specifically for women with disabilities. While the literature review did not identify existing best practice standards or guidelines for the development of violence prevention resources for women with disabilities, there is consensus on several key themes about preventing and responding to violence against women with disabilities that can be extrapolated.

There are clear conceptual frameworks to guide the development of resources about violence and abuse and common barriers that should be considered to ensure resources are relevant, accessible and useful to women with disabilities. This is no mean feat, given the intersecting, multiple factors contributing to the risks and forms of violence against women with disabilities and their diverse needs and experiences. Consultations reinforced the need to promote best practice but also recognise the multiple demands and limited resources of organisations that seek to develop inclusive resources. However, there was consensus that the guidelines should be inclusive of all women with disabilities and applicable to a range of organisations and types of resources.

There is agreement that resources should recognise the expertise of women with disabilities, support independent decision-making and build capacity by exploring multifaceted solutions to meet individual needs. Resources should be based on a sound understanding of gender inequality and the multiple, intersecting determinants of violence against women with disabilities in order to remove barriers to women's engagement with the issues. While there are still gains to be made in cross-sector collaboration on preventing violence against women with disabilities, the family violence, sexual assault, disability, public health and academic sectors do agree on several aspects of good practice. The following guidelines were drafted for consultation with women with disabilities:

### Guideline 1

Women with disabilities are involved in resource design, development and delivery

### Guideline 2

The resource draws on available evidence and makes a link between its purpose, content and expected outcomes

### Guideline 3

The resource articulates women's rights and acknowledges the intersecting factors that contribute to different experiences of violence and abuse for women with disabilities

### Guideline 4

The setting and mode of delivery are safe and responsive

### Guideline 5

The resource is accessible and respects and responds to diversity of experience

### Guideline 6

The resource promotes personal empowerment and offers multiple options or strategies.

# Consultations with women with disabilities

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Consultations were held with 15 women with disabilities (two focus groups and two individual interviews) to seek their input on the draft guidelines. Participants included women who:

- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- live in regional and rural areas
- range in age, including older women
- identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex
- live in the community or in residential services
- have different types of impairments, including women with cognitive disability, sensory disability and complex communication.

A plain English overview of the guidelines and discussion points used in the consultations are at Appendix A.

There was overwhelming support for the six guidelines across the consultations. Participants agreed the six guidelines were all important and should be included in the final document. No additional guidelines were identified.

In relation to each guidelines, specific points of feedback were as follows:

## Guideline 1

### **Women with disabilities are involved in resource design, development and delivery**

Participants endorsed this guideline as a critical part of ensuring the credibility and utility of resources. Women with disabilities have valuable experiences and ideas that can inform resources about preventing or responding to abuse. Involving women with disabilities is respectful and helps to guard against organisations making ill-informed assumptions about women with disabilities and their needs. Opportunities for involvement must be genuine, appropriate time allocations must be given and organisations must actively listen and learn from women with disabilities.



**Guideline 2****The resource draws on available evidence and makes a link between its purpose, content and expected outcomes**

Participants agreed resources must be informed by evidence in order to be credible. Organisations must be clear about the target audience and their needs. Women with disabilities are more likely to trust the organisation and the resource if there has been appropriate research and planning in its development.

It was also noted that organisations should identify appropriate channels to seek user feedback on the resource and update the resource as required. There are several ways that feedback may be collected. Women with disabilities who are part of the resource's target audience should be consulted on the most appropriate and accessible ways to provide feedback.

**Guideline 3****The resource articulates women's rights and acknowledges the intersecting factors that contribute to different experiences of violence and abuse for women with disabilities**

There was broad support for resources that promote respect and personal safety and educate women on their rights. Human rights may be an unfamiliar concept to some people. It is useful for resources to help women understand their rights and how they might seek to uphold those rights, as well as explaining different forms of abuse. Reinforcement of these concepts is also important.

**Guideline 4****The setting and mode of delivery are safe and responsive**

Participants agreed organisations should carefully consider safety issues when developing their resource. Resources should provide clear information on different support options so that women with disabilities do not bear the onus of identifying appropriate supports. Women using the resource may require assistance to identify appropriate supports.

**Guideline 5****The resource is accessible and respects and responds to diversity of experience**

Participants agreed organisations should ensure their resources are accessible to women with disabilities so that women do not have to request information in different formats. It was noted that technology is constantly changing, offering new mechanisms for access, but organisations should not assume all women can access the internet or computers. The key information should be easy to find and presented in plain language and accessible formats – this is fundamental to equality. Glossaries can be a useful way to explain key concepts. Resources should be presented in an attractive way to appeal to target audiences. Some target audiences may benefit from working through the information with a trained worker.

**Guideline 6****The resource promotes personal empowerment and offers multiple options or strategies**

Organisations should develop resources that use different strategies to convey information and promote women's choices. Building women's capabilities through education (including on the different forms of abuse), facilitating connections with peers and skills training were strongly supported. Participants noted that frontline workers should be knowledgeable about abuse prevention and response.

The guidelines have been updated to reflect input from women with disabilities.

# Good practice guidelines

## Glossary of terms

**Abuse and violence:** These terms are used interchangeably to describe ‘any intentional act [against a woman] that results in, or is likely to result in, harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life’.<sup>3</sup> Women with disabilities experience the same types of violence as other women. However, they may also experience other forms of abuse that are ‘particular to their situation of social disadvantage, cultural devaluation and increased dependency on others’<sup>4</sup> such as low quality care or practices that deprive them of dignity in institutions or long-term care settings, as well as:

*‘chemical restraint, forced or coerced sterilisation, forced contraception, forced or coerced psychiatric interventions, medical exploitation, withholding of or forced medication, violations of privacy, forced isolation, seclusion and restraint, deprivation of liberty, denial of provision of essential care, humiliation and harassment... unnecessary institutionalisation, denial of control over their bodies, lack of financial control... and denial of the right to decision-making.’<sup>5</sup>*

Violence and abuse includes physical, sexual, financial, psychological and emotional abuse against a woman as well as neglect and exploitation. Elder abuse of women with disabilities is also in scope.

**Accessible:** The resource is:

- affordable, available, approachable (for example, women with disabilities are aware of the resource and feel comfortable engaging with it),
- appropriate (for example, relevant and engaging), and
- acceptable (for example, barriers to women with disabilities engaging with the resource are removed).<sup>6</sup>

All components of a resource must be accessible and meet the needs of its audience. This includes the resource’s language, format,

delivery mode, assumptions, messaging and the broader organisation’s attitudes, behaviours, culture and procedures.

**Disability:** A “physical, sensory, psychiatric or cognitive impairment (including an intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and dementia) that, “in interactions with various barriers may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.<sup>7</sup>

**Empowering:** The resource enhances the self-determination and active participation of women with disabilities by offering useful and accessible information, removing barriers to engagement and promoting and celebrating women’s capacities and inner strengths.

**Human rights framework:** Recognises the fundamental human rights of all people and the multiple forms of discrimination that women with disabilities face, including by virtue of their gender. Seeks to educate women with disabilities about their rights, including their rights to fully participate in society and live free from abuse. A human rights framework also promotes inclusion and accessibility, ensuring women of all backgrounds and experiences with different types of impairments receive appropriate information and support.

3 *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.* GA Res 48/104, 1993.

4 Frohmader, C, Dowse, L & Didi, A. *Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities: Integrating a Human Rights Perspective.* Women with Disabilities Australia: January 2015.

5 Ibid.

6 Frawley, P, Dyson, S & Robinson, S. *Whatever it takes. Access for women with disabilities to family/domestic violence services.* Sydney: ANROWS (2017).

7 Article 1, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, opened for signature 30 March 2007, 2515 UNTS 3 (entered into force 3 May 2008).



**Prevention of violence against women:**

Preventing violence against women involves addressing its root causes and improving responses. The public health framework for addressing violence involves defining the issue, identifying its causes and risk factors, developing interventions and implementing those that are found to be effective.<sup>8</sup> Prevention activities can be primary, secondary or tertiary:

- **Primary prevention:** Activities that seek to prevent violence before it occurs. May include strategies for whole populations (including women who have not experienced violence).<sup>9</sup>
- **Secondary prevention:** Early intervention activities for groups who may be at greater risk of experiencing violence.<sup>10</sup>
- **Tertiary prevention:** Initiatives that aim to decrease the impacts of violence, ensure women’s safety after violence has occurred and prevent its reoccurrence.<sup>11</sup>

**Resource:** an information source that is designed to help women with disabilities recognise violence and abuse, understand their rights and seek support. Resources may take a variety of forms (including documents, videos, websites, apps and training sessions) and may be a primary, secondary or tertiary prevention initiative.

8 VicHealth 2007, *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Melbourne, Australia.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Frawley, P, Dyson, S, Robinson, S & Dixon, J. 'What does it take? Developing informed and effective tertiary responses to violence and abuse of women and girls with disabilities in Australia: State of knowledge paper.' Sydney: ANROWS, 2015.



## Purpose and target audience

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The good practice guidelines are designed to assist a range of Australian organisations that either:

- seek to support women with disabilities who may have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, violence and abuse
- are developing a resource on violence and abuse for women with disabilities
- wish to identify opportunities to enhance existing resources on violence and abuse to ensure their relevance and accessibility to women with disabilities.

The guidelines are applicable to the development of a range of resources and to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts.

The context in which resources are developed and the quality of implementation affect their effectiveness. As such, organisations developing resources for women with disabilities about

violence and abuse should demonstrate a broader commitment to addressing violence against women with disabilities. Organisations may do so by articulating their commitment to zero tolerance of abuse in a code of practice, proactively supporting the advocacy of women with disabilities, building cross-sector partnerships and collecting and using data relating to the needs of female service users with disabilities.

It is acknowledged that good practice is evolving and organisations face many challenges when designing resources for diverse groups of women in the relatively new field of violence prevention. The guidelines identify current good practice but also encourage organisations to develop innovative ideas that will build the evidence base in the area of preventing violence against women with disabilities.

“ I have found quizzes on websites to be a useful format for imparting information on making women aware they may be in an abusive/unsafe situation. What is okay, not okay and danger signs.”

“ I think it’s important for your organisation to offer a clear and easy way to navigate your website that has a:

- section on your website devoted to women with disabilities that is readily accessible from the home page
- ‘chat with us now’ feature or clearly displayed emergency numbers/links to 24/7 phone counselling
- links to other relevant websites
- a ‘quick exit’ feature for safety while using website
- facility for the website to be read in different languages and clearly displayed interpreter information.”



## How to read the guidelines

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The six guidelines share common themes and complement each other – for example, a resource that is accessible and reflective of the diversity of women with disabilities also acknowledges women’s human rights.

Indicators are provided as suggestions on how organisations’ efforts may align with the guidelines. In some areas, case studies are provided to demonstrate how a resource has met a particular guideline.

For some guidelines, it is likely that organisations will take a staged approach towards alignment with the guidelines. In recognition of this, a continuum is provided for these guidelines with examples of initiatives at different levels of attainment. The continuum is intended to support organisations to reflect on their current efforts and identify opportunities to enhance these efforts.

The continuum categories are defined as follows:

- Sensitivity (working towards current good practice): Demonstrated awareness of the guideline and preliminary steps taken.
- Competency (consistent indicators of current good practice): Demonstrated understanding of the guideline and several actions taken, consistent with current best practice.
- Proficiency (aligned with current good practice and contributing to the evidence base): Consistent alignment with the guideline and a commitment to continuous improvement. New approaches are developed to inform the evidence base.

A continuum is not presented for all guidelines. In some areas, organisations developing resources that are inclusive of women with disabilities should always align with current good practice.



# The guidelines

## Guideline 1

### Women with disabilities are involved in resource design, development and delivery

**Rationale:** The participation of women with disabilities in the development and delivery of resources promotes their personal empowerment. Their participation will enhance the quality, relevance and credibility of resources and ensure their accessibility to target audiences. The involvement of women with disabilities throughout the development of the resource also enhances the organisation's understanding of the needs and experiences of women with disabilities.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- is informed by the women it seeks to support
- provides financial remuneration to women with disabilities involved in developing or delivering the resource in recognition of their time and expertise
- incorporates women's narratives and real-life experiences
- offers opportunity for peer education and discussion
- development process addresses barriers to participation for women with disabilities (for example, provision of communication aids, support worker) and establishes a process to safely manage disclosures of abuse
- development process allows appropriate time and assistance to ensure that women with disabilities' involvement is genuine and that organisations actively listen and learn from women's experiences.

### Practice Continuum

• A small group of women with disabilities are consulted on one stage of development and receive appropriate remuneration.

• **Sensitivity**

• Women who identify with the resource's target audience participate meaningfully in different stages of development and receive appropriate remuneration.

• **Competency**

• Women with disabilities co-produce the resource through all stages of development in a paid capacity. The resource facilitates peer discussion and includes narratives of lived experiences.

• **Proficiency**

## Guideline 2

The resource draws on available evidence and makes a link between its purpose, content and expected outcomes

**Rationale:** Prevention of violence against women with disabilities is an emerging field with a limited evidence base. The prevention of violence against women field is building a body of work that includes women with disabilities (for example, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*) but literature of the effectiveness of violence prevention initiatives for women with disabilities is still emerging.

To promote women's safety and trust and to support evaluation, resources should consider available evidence and explicitly link the resource's aims, content and format to its intended outcomes.

**Indicators:** The development process:

- articulates the resource's role in efforts to prevent violence against women with disabilities
- applies relevant research and theory in design
- includes a scan of the current evidence base and existing resources and engages expert services as appropriate
- clearly communicates a link between the resource's content and expected outcomes
- incorporates mechanisms to seek user feedback on the resource
- considers avenues to independently evaluate the resource.

### Practice Continuum

- The organisation scans the evidence base, documents the resource's aims, contents and expected outcomes and collects participant feedback in different ways.

- The resource design is based on available research, articulates a program logic and plans an evaluation of outputs and outcomes.

- An independent evaluation commences at the outset. There is a demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement and the organisation disseminates findings and lessons learned.

• Sensitivity

• Competency

• Proficiency





## Guideline 3

The resource articulates women's rights and acknowledges the intersecting factors that contribute to different experiences of violence and abuse for women with disabilities

**Rationale:** Resources that aim to prevent or respond to violence against women with disabilities must acknowledge both gender and disability as risk factors for violence and abuse and recognise the multiple, intersecting determinants of violence against women with disabilities. Resources must educate women on their rights and promote respect, personal empowerment and safety. These messages should be reinforced throughout the resource.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- promotes women's rights and articulates the right to safety
- acknowledges gender and disability as risk factors in violence against women with disabilities
- articulates in its aims and objectives the principles of empowering women with disabilities and promoting their safety.



## Guideline 4

### The setting and mode of delivery are safe and responsive

**Rationale:** Women with disabilities face multiple barriers to identifying, disclosing and responding to abuse. Any resource that aims to promote women's empowerment, build trust and raise awareness of abuse must be delivered in a setting and mode that is safe, welcoming and conducive to disclosure. The resource setting and mode of delivery must therefore recognise the multiple barriers women with disabilities face and be culturally responsive.

**Indicators:**

- the organisation has clear, appropriate and coordinated systems to respond to, and pursue, disclosures of abuse
- women with disabilities know how to, and are supported to, access a professional who is trained in responding to abuse disclosures after using the resource
- the organisation considers appropriate ways to offer women with disabilities choice in whether and how they engage with the resource separately from their support workers or family members
- the resource includes prompts for self-care and alerts women that the content includes sensitive issues that may be distressing
- plans for distributing the resource consider the safety of women with disabilities.

#### Case Study A – Alignment With Guideline 4

WDV's 'Our Right to Respect' Peer Education program is a four-session group program for women with disabilities delivered by trained peer educators and co-facilitators. Each session begins by discussing confidentiality and group expectations. A traffic light system is used to help women identify and express how they feel at different times throughout the program. Participants are invited to speak privately with facilitators at any time. Participants receive program materials in advance and are encouraged to identify a learning partner (for example, trusted person) who can discuss the materials with them between sessions. Sessions teach self-care strategies and relaxation exercises.

Processes to manage disclosures of abuse are communicated to participants from the outset and participants who disclose abuse can choose how the disclosure is followed up. A partnership with Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASAs) ensures there are CASA workers in attendance and appropriate arrangements to follow up disclosures. Women are asked not to share other people's personal stories. The facilitators encourage women to share their own experiences but request that any specifics of abuse be discussed with facilitators, rather than in the group setting.

## Guideline 5

### The resource is accessible and respects and responds to diversity of experience

**Rationale:** Consistent with a human rights approach, resources about violence and abuse for women with disabilities must be inclusive, relevant and available in a range of formats. Accessible resources support women's empowerment and safety in violence prevention initiatives and promote respect and dignity.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- embraces and reflects the diverse identities of women with disabilities (for example, age, cultural background, geographic location, socioeconomic status, sexuality, religion)
- allows women with disabilities to choose how they engage with the resource
- language and communication systems are clear and have been tested with target users
- online content complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- messages and graphics reflect the lived experiences of women with disabilities (for example, images in the resource depict women from different cultural backgrounds and women with different types of impairments)
- is developed and delivered with workers who understand the diverse forms of abuse experienced by women with disabilities and the ways in which gender and disability act as risk factors for abuse
- considers opportunities for some target audiences to access the resource with a trained facilitator.

#### Practice Continuum

• The resource adopts plain language, images reflect the diversity of the target audience and there are a few ways for women with disabilities to engage with the resource.

• The resource is available in a range of formats (for example, voice to text, large written font, in person). The content and modes of delivery have been tested with several target users.

• The resource is available in a range of formats and languages. Interpreters trained in violence against women are readily available. All workers involved in delivery understand gender and disability discrimination.

• Sensitivity

• Competency

• Proficiency

#### Case Study B – Alignment With Guideline 5

A training program on human rights and personal safety is designed for women with little or no speech. The content has been tested with several target users from different demographics in individual consultations. The program facilitators understand that many women with complex communication requirements are accustomed to having other people communicate on their behalf and to receiving information that has been mediated. They develop relationships with participants and their supportive networks and learn about each woman's preferred communication methods. The workers ask each woman sensitively and separately from her support worker/family member whether she would like to participate in the program alone or with her worker/family member present. The facilitators use the women's preferred communication tools to run individual sessions and present information via mechanisms other than text (for example, picture boards).

## Guideline 6

The resource promotes personal empowerment and offers multiple options or strategies

**Rationale:** Resources that aim to prevent or respond to violence against women with disabilities must support women's independent decision-making and promote their empowerment. Current best practice involves building women's capacities through education, skills training, raising awareness and exploring multiple strategies to promote safety. Resources should offer women multiple avenues to seek further information and support, so that women with disabilities do not bear the onus of identifying appropriate avenues and supports. This will enhance the relevance of resources and promote women's safety.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- conveys positive messages, adopts empowering language and celebrates women's many strengths
- recognises the expertise of women with lived experience of disability
- facilitates connections with others
- builds women's capacities and explores multiple strategies to promote personal safety
- identifies a range of informal and formal avenues for women to access further support from specialists (for example, family violence and sexual assault services, GPs, police, disability support workers, after hours telephone support) and non-specialists (for example, family, friends, peer support groups).

### Practice Continuum

- The resource promotes women's choices and uses strength-based language.

• Sensitivity

- The resource emphasises the strengths and capabilities of women with disabilities. It identifies different strategies to promote personal safety and avenues for further information and support.

• Competency

- The resource incorporates education, skills training, self-advocacy and referrals that acknowledge the diverse strengths, needs and experiences of women with disabilities.

• Proficiency

### Case Study C – Alignment With Guideline 6

A video about promoting healthy sexual relationships is developed by and for women with intellectual disabilities. The video shows women with an intellectual disability talking about respectful relationships and what good relationships look like to them. The women talk about how they show respect to others and how they identify it in return. There is a short segment with plain language information about women's rights and sexual health. Key messages are repeated throughout. The video contains clear messages that women are not to blame for sexual abuse. The video and accompanying material contain a summary of ways women with an intellectual disability can access support, including through local peer support groups.

# The guidelines – An overview

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## Guideline 1

### Women with disabilities are involved in resource design, development and delivery

**Rationale:** Participation of women with disabilities enhances the quality, relevance, credibility and accessibility of resources and promotes empowerment. It also enhances organisation's understanding of the needs and experiences of women with disabilities.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- is informed by the women it seeks to support
- provides financial remuneration to women with disabilities involved in developing or delivering the resource in recognition of their time and expertise
- incorporates women's narratives and real-life experiences
- offers opportunity for peer education and discussion
- development process addresses barriers to participation for women with disabilities (for example, provision of communication aids, support worker) and establishes a process to safely manage disclosures of abuse
- development process allows appropriate time and assistance to ensure that women with disabilities' involvement is genuine and that organisations actively listen and learn from women's experiences.

## Guideline 2

### The resource draws on available evidence and makes a link between its purpose, content and expected outcomes

**Rationale:** To promote women's safety and trust and to support evaluation, resources should consider available evidence and explicitly link the resource's aims, content and format to its intended outcomes.

**Indicators:** The development process:

- articulates the resource's role in efforts to prevent violence against women with disabilities
- applies relevant research and theory in design
- includes a scan of the current evidence base and existing resources and engages expert services as appropriate
- clearly communicates a link between the resource's content and expected outcomes
- incorporates mechanisms to seek user feedback on the resource
- considers avenues to independently evaluate the resource.





**Guideline 3** The resource articulates women’s rights and acknowledges the intersecting factors that contribute to different experiences of violence for women with disabilities.

**Rationale:** Effective resources recognise the multiple, intersecting determinants of violence against women with disabilities. They educate women on their rights, promote respect, personal empowerment and safety and reinforce these messages.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- promotes women’s rights and articulates the right to safety
- acknowledges gender and disability as risk factors in violence against women with disabilities
- articulates in its aims and objectives the principles of empowering women with disabilities and promoting their safety.

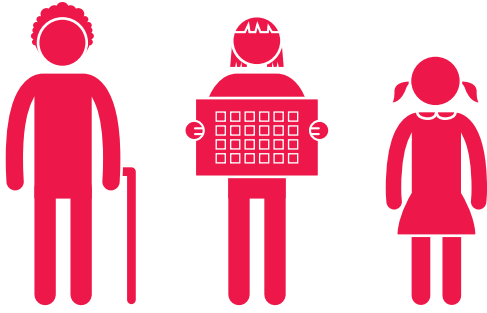


**Guideline 4** The setting and mode of delivery are safe and responsive

**Rationale:** Any resource that aims to promote women’s empowerment, build trust and raise awareness of abuse must be delivered in a setting and mode that is safe, welcoming and conducive to disclosure.

**Indicators:**

- the organisation has clear, appropriate and coordinated systems to respond to, and pursue, disclosures of abuse
- women with disabilities know how to, and are supported to, access a professional who is trained in responding to abuse disclosures after using the resource
- the organisation considers appropriate ways to offer women with disabilities choice in whether and how they engage with the resource separately from their support workers or family members
- the resource includes prompts for self-care and alerts women that the content includes sensitive issues that may be distressing
- plans for distributing the resource consider the safety of women with disabilities.

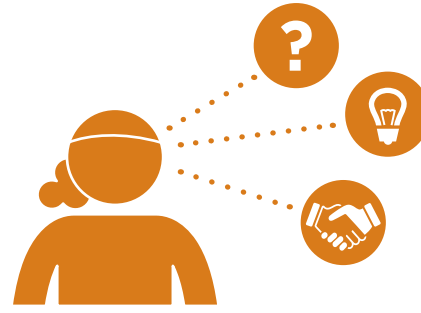


**Guideline 5** The resource is accessible and respects and responds to diversity of experience

**Rationale:** Consistent with a human rights approach, resources about violence and abuse for women with disabilities must be inclusive, relevant and available in a range of formats.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- embraces and reflects the diverse identities of women with disabilities (for example, age, cultural background, geographic location, socioeconomic status, sexuality, religion)
- allows women with disabilities to choose how they engage with the resource
- language and communication systems are clear and tested with target users
- online content complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- messages and graphics reflect the lived experiences of women with disabilities (for example, images in the resource depict women from different cultural backgrounds and women with different types of impairments)
- is developed and delivered with workers who understand the diverse forms of abuse experienced by women with disabilities and the ways in which gender and disability act as risk factors for abuse
- considers opportunities for some target audiences to access the resource with a trained facilitator.



**Guideline 6** The resource promotes personal empowerment and offers multiple options or strategies

**Rationale:** Resources that aim to prevent or respond to violence against women with disabilities must promote their empowerment and build their capacities through education, skills training, raising awareness and exploring multiple strategies to promote safety. Women with disabilities should not bear the onus of identifying appropriate avenues and supports.

**Indicators:** The resource:

- conveys positive messages, adopts empowering language and celebrates women's many strengths
- recognises the expertise of women with lived experience of disability
- facilitates connections with others
- builds women's capacities and explores multiple strategies to promote personal safety
- identifies a range of informal and formal avenues for women to access further support from specialists (for example, family violence and sexual assault services, GPs, police, disability support workers, after hours telephone support) and non-specialists (for example, family, friends, peer support groups).

## Appendix A

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### Plain English overview of the guidelines and consultation points

It is important to know when other people's behaviour is OK and not OK. It is also important to know what to do if you feel unsafe.

Many organisations like ideas on how to make information useful for women with disabilities about safety from violence and abuse. Women with Disabilities Victoria is making guidelines to help with this.

Women with Disabilities Victoria would like your advice on some ideas.

The ideas are:

- Listen to women with disabilities. Women with disabilities have good ideas on how to keep safe.
- Be clear on what the information aims to do. Check for research or other examples that can help.
- Teach women about their human rights.
- Make sure women feel safe when they use the information. Offer support.
- Make sure all women can use the information – including women of different ages, from different countries and different experiences.
  - Information should be available in different ways. For example, large print, on tape, in Braille, in videos, on the internet and face-to-face.
  - Information should be available in different languages.
- Women with disabilities have many strengths and can do many things. Explain the different ways that women can get help or support. Let women with disabilities choose the best way for them.

#### Discussion points:

1. Are these good ideas? Do you have other ideas?
2. What else do organisations need to remember for information about keeping safe?
3. What is the best way to provide information about keeping safe?

**Women with Disabilities Victoria**

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