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An Inclusive and Individualized Response for Victims of Crime with Disabilities: The Adult Advocacy Centers' Model

2021 Ohio Guardianship Association
16th Annual Educational Conference

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A Few Terms

- Victim or Survivor
 - The AACs use both terms inter-changeably due to the diverse cultural populations that it serves.
- Self-Advocate or Advocate/Advocacy
 - Through focus group discussions, the AACs have determined that some individuals prefer to use the term self-advocate. Still, others prefer the term advocate or advocacy when explaining their work in advocating for themselves, others, or both.
- Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE)
 - We use the term forensic nurse examiner instead of sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE). FNE ensures a more trauma-responsive term to use with victims with disabilities and more accurately describes the variety of work they do.



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The Needs Assessment



Why are AACs Important to Ohio?



The AACs conducted a needs assessment in 2019 through the county boards of developmental disabilities.

The needs assessment was the first baseline data collected for the purposes of evaluating the overarching and systemic needs for adults with disabilities who are victims of crimes.



https://www.adultadvocacycenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Needs_Assessment_2019.pdf

Responses to AACs Needs Assessment

- Although Ohio's DD system has several state-of-the-art practices, the needs assessment reflected some gaps in the system for supporting individuals with disabilities who have been a crime victim.
 - Responses were received from more than 35 county boards. This feedback allowed the AACs to capture the need for additional services for adult crime victims with disabilities in Ohio.
 - Overall responses indicated that Ohio currently:
 - needs forensic interview training for professionals working with adult crime victims with disabilities,
 - has low prosecution rates,
 - lacks adequate community supports,
 - lacks effective treatment protocols and follow-up services.
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Needs Assessment: Community Supports

- The survey asked, "Do any support groups exist in your county specifically for crime victims with disabilities?"
 - Counties overwhelmingly responded that there were no specific support groups for people with disabilities.
 - An astonishing 69% of respondents indicated that there were either no support groups or no support groups specifically for individuals with disabilities available in their county.
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Needs Assessment: Additional Resources

- The needs assessment indicated a critical need for additional resources. In response, the AACs have created and are in the process of creating the following materials:
 - Prosecutor's guide
 - Jurist's guide
 - Safety plan template
 - Safety plans guidebook
 - Anti-Human Trafficking Guidebook
 - Informed Consent Guidebook
 - Forensic Nurse Examiner's Guidebook
 - Adapted trauma tools
 - Assessment and intake forms specifically geared towards individuals with disabilities
 - Adapted trauma tools
 - Diversity and Intersectionality through a Disability Lens
 - Mental Health FI Protocol
 - DeafBlind FI Protocol
 - Judges/Magistrate Training
 - Accessibility Training
 - Healthy Relationships
 - Social Stories
 - Assisted Technology Guide



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Needs Assessment: Trainings

- The needs assessment indicated a need for additional training. The AACs are in the process of creating curriculum for the following new training opportunities:
 - Project FIND Foundations training designed for professionals with roles and experience in or working with adult victims and witnesses of crime and individuals with disabilities.
 - Diversity and Intersectionality training focusing on different communities within the disability community
 - Project FIND Law Enforcement training emphasizing best practices for interviewing individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia



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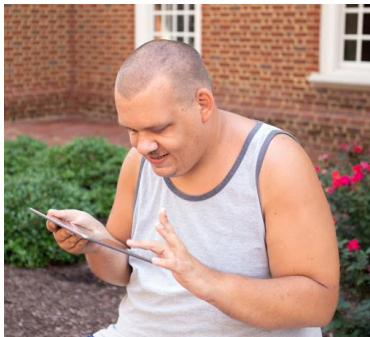
The Adult Advocacy Centers' Model

- The AACs is a new model of services that is being developed to support adults with disabilities who have been abused.
- This model will include a forensic interview protocol that optimizes the possibility that perpetrators will be prosecuted.
- To achieve this goal, the AACs are partnering with local and state agencies and organizations to ensure that crime victims with disabilities are supported in a comprehensive and trauma informed manner.



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Adult Advocacy Centers (AACs)



- The AACs are in the process of designing and creating 2 Recreational Vehicles (RVs) for mobile services.
- The AACs are designing and building 10 centers with disability-specific accommodations that exceed ADA requirements by integrating a universal, multi-sensory and trauma-responsive design
- Assessments, treatment plans, trauma indicator tools and safety plans will be in an accessible format
- The AACs will coordinate, partner and participate in regional Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs)



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AACs: Mobile and RV Services

- The AACs also plan to have mobile Recreational Vehicles (RVs) equipped with state of the art equipment to bring services to areas for victims of crime who are unable to come to one of the centers.
- A mobile team will also be available for specific cases where the victim of crime is unable to travel (i.e., facility-based, high medical need, etc.).



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MDTs: Who makes up the team?

AACs will facilitate MDTs within local communities that are typically made up of:

- law enforcement agencies;
- expertly trained forensic interviewers;
- prosecutors;
- victim advocates;
- staff from adult protective services, disability-specific agencies, and local hospitals;
- medical and mental health professionals;
- Victim/survivor;
- and guardians/support person (when applicable).



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What Do MDTs Do?

- MDTs are an important part of the investigation, trauma-responsive services, and the prosecution of crimes committed against people with disabilities.
- These will be specialized teams of agencies work together to review cases, ensure continuity of care for the survivor, and work with the law enforcement and prosecutors to provide information.



AACs: Services

- The AACs will provide forensic medical evaluations and develop related protocols that are specifically geared to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
- Forensic interviews with advanced disability-specific training will be provided at all centers.
- A mobile team and RV unit will be created to provide needed services to individuals who live in remote areas or are unable to travel.
- The AACs will actively engage in case coordination with MDTs.



AACs: Services



The AACs are in the process of developing the following programs:

- Disability-specific and inclusive community education and resources.
- Information Technology (IT) case management system Specifically for the AACs.
- Support services and trauma-responsive aftercare for individuals with disabilities.
- Support groups & peer-led groups.



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AACs: Training



- The AACs have a deep commitment to training.
- Include training centers in all AACs.
- Create and coordinate advanced disability-specific training in a wide variety of areas, including forensic interviewing, investigating interview techniques and assisted technology.



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AACs: Partnerships

- The AACs are establishing partnerships with local, community, state and national resources and agencies.
- National experts in the fields of abuse, forensic services, specific disabilities, support services, medical, criminal justice, clinical services and advocacy will be used as consultants.
- People with disabilities, including survivors, will be consulted to develop accessible resources, trainings and education specifically for victims of crime.



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Types of Cases AACs Will Take

- AACs are not first responders, but will arrange appointments after receiving referrals from partnering agencies.
- The AACs will take cases that require forensic evidence collection (including forensic interviews), involve victims of crime with disabilities, and/or involve investigating agencies. Medical services are not necessarily a determining factor for services.
- Types of cases may include but are not limited to:
 - Sexual assault or violence
 - Domestic violence
 - Physical abuse, neglect and other violent cases
 - Any cases in need of evidence collection
 - Others on a case-by-case basis



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First-of-Their-Kind

Ohio will be the first in both the nation and the world to build these types of centers.



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AACs' Locations

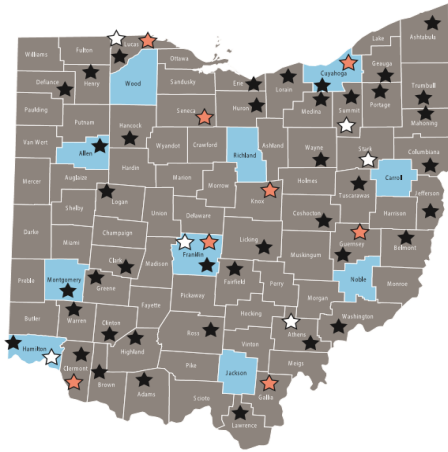
The ten centers will be located throughout Ohio and the AACs will work in partnership with state, regional, and community agencies to coordinate a response that promotes the safety and well-being of all individuals.

- Centers are scheduled to be built in the following counties:
 - Allen
 - Carroll
 - Cuyahoga
 - Franklin
 - Hamilton
 - Jackson
 - Montgomery
 - Noble
 - Richland
 - Wood



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Planned Locations by County and Adjacent Resources:



Counties in blue indicate planned sites for Adult Advocacy Centers

★ Counties with Child Advocacy Centers, including satellite offices and planned sites

★ Counties with State Developmental Centers

☆ Counties with State Psychiatric Hospitals

The Adult Advocacy Centers will break ground on the center in Franklin County with a goal date of 2021.



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Developing Community Supports



The AACs will address systemic gaps by working with advocates and local agencies and organizations to create support groups that are accessible, holistic and trauma-responsive, in order to meet the individualized needs of those seeking additional support.



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Developing Community Supports



- The AACs are currently compiling information about local and statewide advocacy groups in Ohio to create the most up-to-date list of advocacy resources for people with disabilities.
- In collaboration with the Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA), the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council, and People First of Ohio, the AACs are creating an online resource for advocates.



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Developing Community Supports

- The AACs are also collaborating with advocates to develop an accessible guidebook on how to be an advocate.
- This guidebook, based on feedback from advocates, will offer different definitions of advocacy and how to connect with the advocacy community, for those who are interested.



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Project FIND (Forensic Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities)

Advanced Forensic Interview Certificate Four Day Training



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Project FIND

- Establishing and implementing a protocol that is legally defensible to assist in the prosecution of crimes.
- This training is for establishing and implementing a protocol that is legally defensible to assist in the prosecution of crimes against people with disabilities. It is not meant for professionals who may be hired as a third party to investigate or advise a private company or other organization on the prevention or uncovering of potential liability, which would be considered a conflict of interest. In keeping with its mission to protect crime victims with disabilities, the AACs reserve the right to reject such applicants.



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What is Project FIND?

- The Advanced Forensic Interviewing for Individuals with Disabilities certificate through our training program, Project FIND, which was funded through a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant through the Ohio Attorney General's office.
- The training teaches forensic interviewing best practices and makes considerations and adaptations to account for each individual's disability, mental health disorder, assistive technology, language capacity and cultural background.



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Project FIND (Forensic Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities)

Advanced Prosecutor Training



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Advanced Prosecutor Training

- The Project FIND Two-Day Prosecutor Training is designed for prosecutors who want to increase their knowledge about the needs of crime victims with disabilities and learn about different ways to pursue charges in these cases.
- The curriculum is designed to support prosecutors to develop a broader understanding of Intellectual Disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Physical Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Communication Disorders, Mental Health Disorders, Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders, Bipolar and Related Disorders, Depressive Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, and Trauma-Related Disorders. Understanding the unique characteristics of these groups and the ability to communicate effectively is paramount in creating safe environments and effectively prosecuting cases.



Project FIND (Forensic Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities)

Adapted Forensic Interviewing Individuals Who Do Not Speak



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Adapted Forensic Interviewing

- The Adapted FIND training is designed for established forensic interviewers with previous basic training and extensive experience in forensic interviewing and or working with individuals with disabilities.
- The curriculum is designed to support forensic interviewers to gather information from alleged victims and witnesses in the most reliable and legally defensible manner. Topics include: Person First/Identity First Language; History of Disabilities; Statistics and Incident Rates; Myths/Biases/Assumptions; Language and Perspective; Overview and Tips for Communicating with Individuals who do not speak; Assistive Communication Devices; Adapted Interviewing for Individuals who do not speak; and Post-Interview Considerations.



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Project FIND (Forensic Interviewing Individuals with Disabilities)

Foundations for Forensic Interviewing Adults



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Foundations for Forensic Interviewing Adults

- The FIND Foundations five-day training is designed for professionals with roles and experience in or working with adult victims and witnesses of crime and individuals with disabilities.
- The curriculum is designed to support professionals to gather information from alleged victims and witnesses in the most reliable and legally defensible manner.
- Curriculum topic areas include: Trauma Informed Approach; Interview Setting; Remaining Neutral; Reducing Authoritative Presence of Interviewer; Communication Skills; Memory; Abuse Dynamics; Question Types; Engagement and Rapport; Interview Instructions; Transition to Topic of Concern; Topic of Concern; Closure; and Post Interview Considerations.



Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide: Patients with Disabilities



Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide

- Medical facilities may lack knowledge in responding and providing care for patients with disabilities
 - Medical and nursing schools provide only brief mention of caring for patients with disabilities
 - Forensic nurses receive minimal education on caring for patients with disabilities during their initial 40-hour didactic



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Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide

- Child Advocacy Centers provide holistic care for victims of violence, including those with disabilities up to 21 years of age.
 - The Adult Advocacy Centers will provide the same holistic care for victims of violence with disabilities 18 years of age and older
 - Hospitals and clinics generally lack the accommodations for forensic interviews, including supportive staff and various communication devices.
 - Communication with persons with disabilities can take an extended period of time.
 - Hospitals are noisy, busy places, not amiable to a person with disabilities who has experienced trauma.



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Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide

- The Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide provides an overview of the healthcare response to patients who may be victims of violence
 - Definitions and types of disabilities
 - Crime statistics
 - Relevant laws
 - Special considerations
 - Vulnerabilities
 - Determining capacity to consent
 - Eliminating harmful language
 - FNE vs SANE



Forensic Nurse Examiner Guide

- Medical Forensic Examination for Patients with a Disability
 - Ethical considerations including autonomy
 - Environmental accommodations
 - Communication guidelines and technologies
 - Interpreter services
- Community Partners
- Glossary of Common Terms
- References



Human Trafficking Needs Assessment



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The Human Trafficking Needs Assessment

- Although Ohio specific data has been collected regarding victims of human trafficking, disability-related information is omitted from the process.
- In 2018, law enforcement reported 242 human trafficking investigations, leading to 80 arrests, and 61 successful criminal convictions. Data regarding victims is kept according to gender, age, and race. Disability is not included in the data collected.



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The Human Trafficking Needs Assessment

- DODD provided the AACs with data regarding Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) involving human trafficking and the systemic work that they provide.
- Ohio's Anti-Human Trafficking Coalitions were contacted by the AACs and asked to complete a survey in an effort to collect disability-specific data and information.



Responses to the Human Trafficking Needs Assessment

- Responses were received from 14 of Ohio's Anti-Trafficking Coalitions out of the 24 contacted.
- Overall responses indicated that Ohio currently:
 - lack of disability-specific outreach,
 - lack of comprehensive outreach efforts of support services,
 - lack of data collection pertaining to victims of human trafficking with disabilities due to the absence of consistent screening processes.



Needs Assessment: Screening Tools

- The AACs will create screening tools for all disability types and a comprehensive guidebook providing relevant and comprehensive resources.
- The screening tools will be 1-page documents that may be used by disability organizations and anti-human trafficking coalitions to promote data collection and encourage referrals to disability and service organizations to establish eligibility and service coordination.



Needs Assessment: Guidebook & Training

- In an effort to support prosecutors and increase prosecution rates involving human trafficking cases involving a victim with a disability, the AACs also plan to develop a comprehensive guidebook.
- Designed for advocates, professionals, and prosecutors.
- In an effort to ensure that a standard, comprehensive, and effective interview process is used the AACs plan to create a forensic interview protocol for crime victims of human trafficking with disabilities.



Needs Assessment: Outreach & Support Services

- The creation of support services, including trauma counseling, must begin in conjunction with outreach in order to aid victims who do not report.
- As there are no comprehensive support services specifically for human trafficking victims with disabilities, the AACs plan to pilot support service programs to address this systemic gap.



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AACs: Additional Resources

- Advocacy
- Referrals
- Case and court updates
- Court accompaniment
- Disaster responses
- Expert consultation
- Case review



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Adult Advocacy Centers were not created to help crime victims with disabilities find their voice, but to teach everyone else how to listen.



We are on a journey to create a new and comprehensive service for crime victims with disabilities and want to hear from you.

If you have questions about how to better services, please reach out to us.



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Thank You!

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