

Improving Attitudes with Action: Moving Beyond the Myths about People with Disabilities



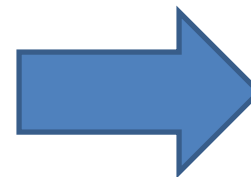
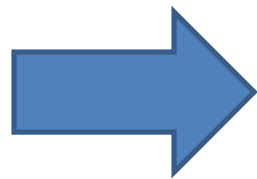
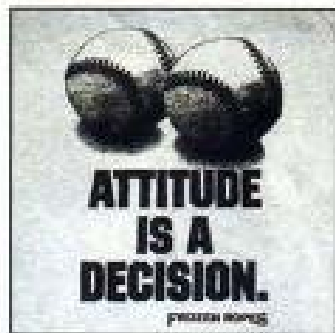
Shirley Paceley and Mary Suggs

Mary speaks out



Attitudes about people with disabilities

- Personal history
- Personal attitudes about crime victims
- Personal attitudes about people with disabilities
- Attitude---Behavior---Results



Attitudes about people with disabilities

- Increase risk of victimization
- Decrease access to victim services

Two approaches to attitude change

- Theory of persuasion (Awareness programs)
- Theory of Exposure

Theory of Persuasion: Awareness Programs

- Communicate accepted behaviors
- Policy change that influences conformity to new norms and behavior
- Who delivers the message
- Positive messages gain support
- Audience engages with messenger

Theory of Exposure

- Experience active, equal relationship over time
- Work toward a common goal
- Opportunity to get to know each other
- Information disconfirms the stereotypes
- Active cooperation
- Positive experience

Illinois Imagines

- Statewide team
- Engaged women with disabilities in identifying issues, barriers, etc.
- 32 teams across the state
- Each team had a Resource Consultant to structure and add credibility
- Women with disabilities active participants
- Women with disabilities in leadership roles

Illinois Imagines

- Icebreaker activities
- Charter, strategic plan,
- Trauma-Informed and Disability-Informed Reviews
- Policy changes—laws and mandated training
- Co training of education programs

Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Council

- Responding to victims with disabilities
- Committee includes people with disabilities
- Statewide conference: 4 people with disabilities and a mother presented
- Follow up with all council coordinators
- Illinois Attorney General's Office—Court Disability Coordinators

Illinois Voices

- Statewide self-advocacy initiative
- Organizations equalized power relationships by engaging people in employee hiring, training, evaluations
- People with disabilities engaged in policy development, committees, Board of Directors
- People with disabilities teaching peers about abuse and neglect

Myth or Fact?

- Myth: a usually traditional story of historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of people or explain a practice, belief, or factual phenomenon.
- Fact: knowledge or information based on real occurrences. Truth. An objective and verifiable observation.

What do you think?

1. Having a disability makes a person vulnerable to violence.

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

What do you think?

2. Most people with disabilities are credible witnesses in a court proceedings.

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

What do you think?

3. People with disabilities are safer from violence if they live in a group home or structured living situation?

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

What do you think?

4. When a person with a disability is a victim of a crime, it is helpful to have a support person/family member explain what happened?

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

What do you think?

5. I need to understand as much as I can about disabilities to effectively communicate with a crime victim who has a disability.

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

What do you think?

6. Crime victims with disabilities need specialized and separate services?

Strongly agree

Strongly Disagree

Consider this:

- Emphasis on vulnerabilities is a risk factor
- Emphasis on vulnerabilities decreases access to victim services
- All people have gifts, talents and contributions
- Do we want to focus on vulnerabilities or on competencies?

Consider this:

- Many people with disabilities are credible witnesses
- Can vs. can't
- A key question:
"What is it that I need that I do not have?"
- Find the accommodation

Consider this:

- People who live in group homes typically have more risk factors for experiencing violence than those who live independently.
- Compliance, lack of critical information, isolation, rigid schedules, power issues, emphasis on vulnerabilities, etc.

Consider this:

- The person who experienced the crime is in the best position to explain what happened to them.
- Support people/family members *can* be great at providing support to the person and at suggesting accommodations.
- Support person/family member *may* be offender.

Consider this:

- Disability Competence Model
- Disability Humility Model

Consider this:

- “All my life, ‘special’ has meant separate and not equal. When I was attacked, I didn’t want a ‘special’ detective, I wanted a good detective.”
- Since isolation is a risk factor for violence, do we want to continue practices which separate out people with disabilities?

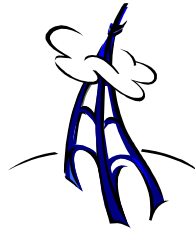
Consider this:

- In each situation, I will make the 'least dangerous assumption' for the person who has experienced a crime.

Action Steps

- What bright ideas do you have to engage people with disabilities in victim services work?





Blue Tower Training Center

Blue Tower Training (BTT) is a division of Macon Resources, Inc. (MRI) which provides training, consultation, training materials and resources on a national as well as international basis.

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