



Understanding the Adult Advocacy Centers

Summer 2021



The Adult Advocacy Centers exist to teach the world how to hear what people with disabilities have to say — particularly when they are victims of crime.

We're breaking new ground for victims and survivors with disabilities.





The Adult Advocacy Centers' Vision

Our vision is to serve adults with disabilities who are alleged victims or witnesses of abuse, maltreatment or neglect. Our staff and partner agencies are expertly trained to meet the needs of each individual in a holistic manner, doing everything possible to ensure they are the center of the investigation and treatment plan.

In this brochure, you can learn more about our work:

- Trainings
- Victim Services
- Centers
- Mobile RV Units
- Publications



Trainings

The Adult Advocacy Centers (AACs) offer a variety of trainings for professionals wishing to better serve victims and survivors with disabilities.

Diversity and Intersectionality Training Through a Disability Lens

This training is for any individual or agency looking to expand or gain knowledge on the topics of diversity, intersectionality, cultural education and individuals with disabilities.

Forensic Nurse Examiner Training

In this training, registered nurses learn how to provide comprehensive medical and forensic care for patients who have been victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking and other forms of violence.

Trauma-Informed Care for Individuals with Disabilities

Trauma impacts a disproportionate number of people with disabilities, but many mental health professionals feel unprepared to treat individuals with disabilities who have experienced trauma. This training will discuss disability issues and provide specific information on adapting interventions to support people on their journey to processing and coping with trauma.



Project FIND Trainings

Forensic Interviewing for Individuals with Disabilities, known as Project FIND, is a collection of CEU-eligible training courses offered by the AACs in partnership with Modell Consulting Group.

Project FIND Foundations – teaches the basic skills of performing forensic interviews for adult crime victims

Project FIND Advanced – helps established forensic interviewers deepen their understanding about interviewing victims with disabilities, including accommodations and cultural needs

Project FIND Adapted: Forensic Interviewing Individuals Who Do Not Speak – teaches established forensic interviewers to adapt their approach for individuals who do not speak, use gestures to communicate, speak few words or utilize a communication device

Project FIND Prosecutor – gives prosecutors tools to increase their knowledge about the needs of crime victims with disabilities and learn about different ways to pursue charges in these cases

Project FIND Law Enforcement – offers law enforcement first responders an opportunity to increase their knowledge about the needs of crime victims with disabilities and learn the most effective preliminary investigative steps to take when called to handle a matter involving a victim or witness with disabilities



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What is a forensic interview?

Forensic interviews are conducted by trained professionals to gather information in a non-leading manner that may be used in a criminal investigation and can be admissible in a court of law.

Victim Services

Forensic Interviewing

The AACs provide forensic interviewers who are highly trained and qualified to conduct forensic interviews with victims with disabilities when there is evidence of a crime. This approach to forensic interviewing is unique and transforming the accessibility of the criminal justice system for victims with disabilities. The forensic interviewers serve as guest members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) and are only responsible for conducting the interview, meeting with the broader MDT (as needed), reviewing related documents before the interview and testifying in court if subpoenaed. The AACs are offering this service free of charge.

Victim Advocacy

In addition to forensic interviewing services, the AACs also have a Registered Advocate with Advanced Standing on staff with specific training in victim services for individuals with disabilities. Our victim advocate can consult virtually with the victim and/or their family on the day of the forensic interview via video conferencing, phone call or in the individual's preferred method of communication. She can speak generally about the victim's rights and the judicial process, with the caveat that not all cases move forward through court. Unfortunately, she cannot provide county-specific information but can offer contact information for the victim's local victim advocate or agency. The AACs' victim advocate can also work closely with local advocates or other victim service agencies to ensure that all accessibility needs are identified and addressed and the victim receives any needed accommodations. The AACs are offering this service free of charge.



Centers

Plans are in motion to build specially designed centers throughout Ohio. These centers will bring together highly trained teams of professionals to perform forensic interviews and collect evidence in crimes against adults with disabilities, including cases of assault, sexual violence, domestic violence and human trafficking. The Adult Advocacy Centers will break new ground by incorporating both universal and multi-sensory design into each location, allowing us to serve each client safely and purposefully, according to their individual needs. These centers will allow all adults with disabilities to access victim services in an equal, inclusive and accessible way, no matter where they live in the state. The AACs model is the first of its kind anywhere in the world.

Mobile RV Units

Fully accessible and mobile RV units will allow the AACs to take our groundbreaking services to adult crime victims with disabilities anywhere they need us in the state of Ohio. The fully equipped RV units will contain state-of-the-art technology and accessible, trauma-responsive features, including an interview room, an observation room and a medical examination room. A specially designed interior will include features and materials to accommodate a broad array of sensory, communication, mobility and therapeutic needs. The RVs will also have a fully accessible bathroom, a wheelchair lift for entering and exiting, and braille signage.





Publications

Since 2019, the AACs have created more than two dozen publications that offer information and support for survivors with disabilities and the professionals who work with them. Some of these include:

- A Guide to Informed Consent for People with Disabilities
- A Jurist's Guide for Criminal Cases Involving Individuals with Disabilities
- Assisted Safety-Planning Guidebook
- Self-Directed Safety-Planning Guidebook
- A Forensic Nurse Examiner's Guide to Caring for Patients with Disabilities
- A Resource Guidebook for Human Trafficking Victims and Survivors with Disabilities
- A Prosecutor's Guide for Crimes Involving Victims with Disabilities



Contact Us

Want to reach out? Call 614-338-8809 or send a message at adultadvocacycenters.org/contact.

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