Sexual assault prevention for women with intellectual disabilities: a critical review of the evidence


Abstract: Although research has indicated that women with intellectual disabilities are significantly burdened with sexual violence, there is a dearth of sexual assault prevention research for them. To help address this serious knowledge gap, the authors summarize the findings of general sexual assault prevention research and discuss its implications for women with intellectual disabilities. Next, the authors evaluate interventions published in both the peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed literature from a comprehensive search of the scientific literature as well as from recommendations made by disability and sexual assault service providers in the United States. The results of this comprehensive literature review found 4 sexual violence prevention programs that were designed for participants with intellectual disabilities and that had undergone some type of evaluation. Each program and its evaluation are critically and systematically reviewed. Based on the authors' review of these programs as well as the wider literature, they conclude with recommendations and discuss the work that remains to decrease the incidence of sexual violence against women with intellectual disabilities.