



## Persons with disabilities in shelters for victims **OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### HELP TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Shelters for victims of domestic violence that are accessible to all are an important service ensuring the human rights and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. This means shelters that are fully accessible both in terms of physical accessibility and the accessibility of support and information. There should be available different kinds of means of communication as well as information that is accessible and understandable to all persons with disabilities.

Check the list of shelters at: [www.thl.fi/turvakotipalvelut](http://www.thl.fi/turvakotipalvelut) (in Finnish)

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT GREATER RISK

Violence is violence no matter who the victim is. Disability does not protect against violence. Disabled children and adults alike are at greater risk of falling victims of violence than people without disabilities.

Disability may also make it more difficult to seek help.

Persons with disabilities are especially vulnerable to violence because of their dependence on others, their invisibility and their inability to protect themselves against violence. Usually persons with disabilities know their abuser beforehand.

### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS

There are a variety of aspects to disability, and persons with disabilities do not form any homogeneous group.

The Services and Assistance for the Disabled Act define persons with disabilities as someone who have, due to their disability or illness, particular long-term difficulties in managing their ordinary functions in everyday life. These difficulties are different kinds of limitations in functioning caused by a disability or illness.

### SPECIFIC FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST DISABLED PERSONS

- damage to assistive devices
- manipulation of medication
- negligence of necessary assistance
- threatening with sending them to an institution
- leaving them alone or without assistance
- breaking their self-esteem by mocking their disability

## Violence against persons with disabilities can be committed by

- current or former partners
- family members
- room mates
- relatives
- personal assistants
- official carers in various services
- acquaintances
- strangers.

## Important to know

There are specific forms of violence against persons with disabilities that professionals should bear in mind so that they can identify and help those who have experienced violence.

### TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

- Staff at the shelters should familiarise themselves with the different forms of violence against persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are not always able to recognise the violence they experience. They are not always aware of their rights and personal boundaries.
- It is important to make persons with disabilities more aware of violence, sexual violence and of how to seek help.
- The client must be arranged the possibility to discuss the violence so that the abuser is not present.



### IMMIGRANTS FACE PARTICULAR CHALLENGES

- Persons with disabilities who have immigrated into Finland are often unaware of the services available. They may also lack the necessary language skills or social networks.
- They may not be familiar with the concept of shelters for victims of domestic violence if the service does not exist in their country of origin. They often need an interpreter.
- Interpretation should be taken into account already when the services are planned.
- Plain language benefits those persons who already know the language a little.

### MORE INFORMATION IN FINNISH

[www.thl.fi/turvakotipalvelut](http://www.thl.fi/turvakotipalvelut)  
[www.thl.fi/kasvunkumppanit](http://www.thl.fi/kasvunkumppanit) > työn tueksi >  
Lähisuhde- ja perheväkivallan ehkäisytyö

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