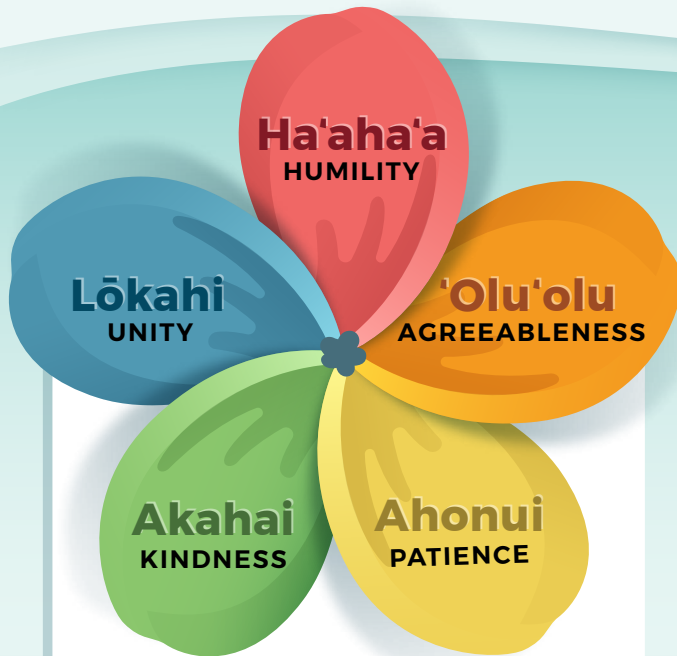


# Practicing Aloha to End Sexual Violence Among People with Disabilities



**1 in 5**  
adults in Hawai'i  
have a disability.<sup>1</sup>

## ALOHA SPIRIT

*Coordination of mind and heart within each person*

The Aloha Spirit Law, Hawai'i Revised Statutes § 5-7.5, recognizes that each person is important for collective existence.

**Individuals with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence.**

People with disabilities are at greater risk of experiencing rape and other forms of sexual violence than people without disabilities.

An estimated **2 in 5 women** survivors of rape had a disability at the time of the rape.

Nearly **1 in 4 men** who have survived sexual violence other than rape had a disability at the time of the victimization.<sup>2</sup>



Together, we can **change the social norms** that create circumstances that put those with a disability at increased vulnerability. We must address sexual violence alongside sexism, racism, and ableism.



**Primary prevention** is the effort to prevent violence before it happens. Promoting awareness, providing sexual health education that is medically accurate, fostering a culture of respect and consent, and empowering individuals to report incidents can contribute to preventing sexual violence.

<sup>1</sup> Inclusive of disabilities related to mobility, cognition, independent living, hearing, vision, and self-care. 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey Data analysis found at: "U.S. State Profile Data: Adults 18+ years of age." Centers for Disease Control Disability and Health Data System (DHDS), [www.cdc.gov/dhds/impacts/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/dhds/impacts/index.html). <sup>2</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. "Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Among People with Disabilities." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020. [www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/sexual-violence-and-intimate-partner-violence-among-people-with-disabilities.html](http://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/sexual-violence-and-intimate-partner-violence-among-people-with-disabilities.html)

**The Aloha Spirit Law** guides our commitment to **reducing risks** and **enhancing protection** against sexual violence. When we understand the challenges that individuals with disabilities face, we can more effectively protect them by reaching out with **kindness**, building **unity** by addressing bullying, and fostering safe, affirming communities for all people.

## Recognizing Risk Factors & Centering Protective Factors

Studies show that **risk factors** increase the risk of sexual violence, while **protective factors** decrease the risk of sexual violence.

It's important to tailor protective measures to the specific needs and abilities of each individual, taking into consideration factors such as the type and severity of the disability, communication abilities, and personal preferences.



### Risk Factors

#### **Dependence on Others & Power**

**Imbalances:** People with disabilities may depend on others for assistance, making them more vulnerable to abuse by caregivers or others in positions of power.

**Social Isolation:** Limited social networks and support systems make it harder for some people with disabilities to seek help or share their experiences.

#### **Stereotypes and Stigmas/Ableism:**

Stereotypes and stigmas may contribute to the belief that individuals with disabilities are less credible when reporting incidents of sexual violence. Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior.



### Protective Factors

**Education and Awareness:** Providing people with disabilities and their caregivers with education about sexual abuse, consent, and healthy relationships can equip them to recognize and respond to potential threats and helps make them less likely to be targeted.

**Social Support:** Building a strong and expansive support network of friends, family, caregivers, and professionals can provide additional protection and resources.

**Accessible Reporting Mechanisms:** Ensuring that reporting mechanisms are accessible and responsive to the needs of people with disabilities can encourage them to report incidents of abuse without fear of retribution.

## Percentage of adults in Hawai'i with select functional disability types

8%

Mobility

8%

Cognition

5%

Independent Living

6%

Hearing

3%

Vision

2%

Self-care

For more information about sexual violence prevention education, please visit the Sex Abuse Treatment Center at [satchawaii.org](http://satchawaii.org).

## Disability Research and Policy in the Hawai'i State Legislature

**SB2051** and **HB2160** related to disability health disparity and required data collection were introduced in the 2024 legislative session. Neither measure passed but advocates continue to work towards reducing health disparities among people with disabilities in Hawai'i.



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"Understanding Disability Inclusion and Ableism." National Sexual Violence Resource Center, March 23, 2022, URL: [www.nsvrc.org/blogs/understanding-disability-inclusion-and-ableism](http://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/understanding-disability-inclusion-and-ableism).