



# Sexual Abuse Report

**Information Sharing and Advisory Committee (ISAC)**

**April 12, 2022**

**Oscar Drummond, Lead Ambassador and SASE representative**

**Gretchen Laudenslager, Ambassador and SAPNA representative**

**Sharon Harper-Young, SAU1 Projects Manager**

# Self Advocates United as 1 (SAU1)

has a mission to support  
the self advocacy of people with disabilities  
for positive impact in our communities  
and in people's lives.



# About SAU1

- ▶ SAU1 is a PA statewide non profit with a mission to support the self advocacy of people with disabilities for positive impact in our communities and in people's lives.
- ▶ Our work is directed by a volunteer Board, whose members are all people with developmental disabilities.
- ▶ SAU1's 28 staff are from all over the state and 85% of them are self advocates, with the rest being family members.
- ▶ All of our events are created and led by professional self advocates with support from trained facilitators.

# SAU1 with the PA DDC

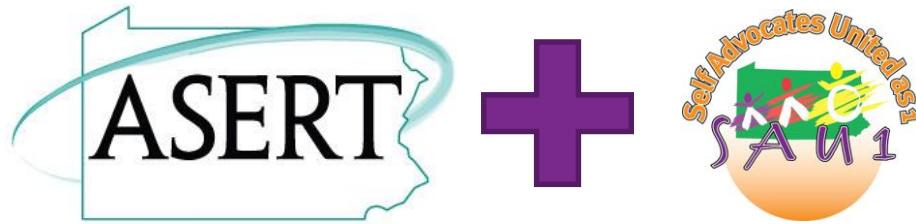


- ▶ SAU1 is grateful to have been long supported and funded by the PA DDC.
- ▶ Addressing relationships and trauma through support and funding from the PA DDC for our Self Advocacy Support and Empowerment project (SASE).
- ▶ Creating an event to talk about Relationships: what makes them healthy, what makes them unhealthy, and what to do about unhealthy relationships. We held 7 virtual events reaching 136 people.



- ▶ The DDC supported our work to create and offer “You’re Not Alone” to talk about mental health and trauma. We held 8 virtual events with a total of 83 participants.
- ▶ The DDC also supported and funded a Community Response project around trauma, where we gathered people’s stories of what they have done to manage their own trauma.

# SAU1 with the ASERT



- ▶ SAU1 is funded by the Central Region Asert to work on different areas of empowerment.
- ▶ Currently we are working on events around gender, sexuality, and “coming out” to support folks to learn about what that all means, and to help them understand themselves or others who are in those communities.
- ▶ Statistics show that people in the LGBTQ community are at higher risk for all kinds of abuse.
- ▶ We are also working with the ASERT around resilience – to better understand trauma, and to strengthen our ability to live with and through trauma.

## SAU1 with ODP =



- ▶ ODP, through a contract with Columbus, funds our Self Advocacy Power Network for All (SAPNA) project, to support peer to peer empowerment.
- ▶ SAPNA created a Sexual Abuse Awareness event in 2018.
- ▶ ODP staff and a person from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape helped us.

# Special precautions for Abuse events

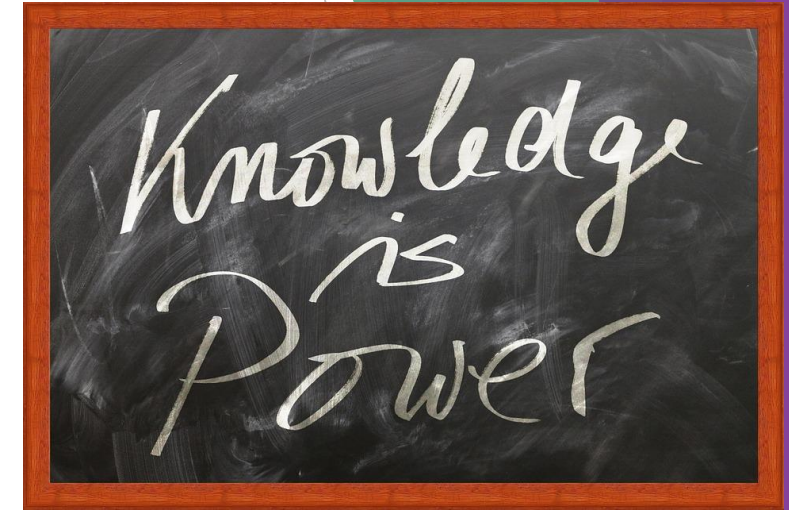
We have strict rules for these events.

- ▶ The event must be held in a place with private rooms.
- ▶ The participants are limited to 15 adult self advocates.
- ▶ Only adult self advocates can be in any of the 3 event rooms so they keep control of their experience – no family, friends, or mandatory reporters.
- ▶ We offer a comfort room near the event room with drinks and snacks so folks may leave if they need to.
- ▶ A counselor from a local victim's crisis center attends to offer support and resources to anyone.



# The Sexual Abuse curriculum

- ▶ The event includes some basic facts, like real names for body parts, brief descriptions of sexual acts, and explaining what consent means.
- ▶ We have illustrations of body parts and sexual acts drawn by one of our staff.
- ▶ We also use life size models of different body parts.
- ▶ Many people with disabilities may not have been taught what the real names are, or what they look like.
- ▶ The words they use for acts and body parts may not be understood by others. It is important they know the real words for things so they can speak up about their experience.



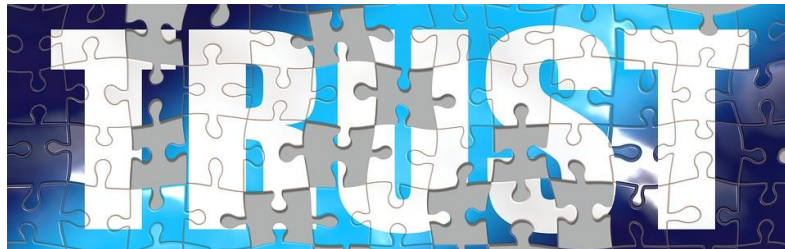
# The Sexual Abuse curriculum

- ▶ We try to help people understand that abusers may be ANYONE.
- ▶ As we know most people are abused, sexually or otherwise, by someone they know. Even worse, by someone they trust.
- ▶ We offer self advocates ideas for how to tell what happened to them, what mandatory reporters are, and how to report.



# The Sexual Abuse curriculum

- ▶ We never use the word SAFE.
- ▶ We do not tell people what they should do to “protect” themselves.
- ▶ Those kinds of ideas put the responsibility on the victim or survivor of abuse.
- ▶ We don't ever want someone to think abuse is their fault.
- ▶ And we all know that people are abused, sexually or otherwise, no matter what they do.
- ▶ If we offer any of those kinds of advice, and a person follows it and is still abused, how can they trust advice from anyone again?



# Challenges



- ▶ We held some events before Covid. Our audiences were engaged and appreciated the information, and the chance to talk about what happened without judgement.
- ▶ We had to cancel many of them because of lack of registration.
- ▶ We heard that providers did not want to support folks to attend.
- ▶ Some reasons were that the provider did not feel they could deal with the trauma response of folks that attended.
- ▶ Other reasons were that providers felt they should be in the room.
- ▶ We shared this at an ISAC meeting in 2019.

# SAU1 with Providers: Before Covid

- ▶ Two provider associations – RCPA and the Provider Alliance – stepped up and reached out to us, and contracted with us separately to share parts of the Sexual Abuse presentation and its value to its members. Sharon and Oscar did a great job.
- ▶ KEPRO also stepped up and contracted with us to hold the event with self advocates, and offered a training at the same time for support folks on Trauma Response.
- ▶ That way folks who left our event could be more effectively supported even if the support folks did not hear what a self advocate said.



Oscar Drummond and Sharon Harper-Young at an event.

# SAPNA Moving Forward

- ▶ Oscar Drummond represents SAU1 at the Provider Registry Task Force with the hope that abusers within the system will be identified and stopped, instead of moving to another position to abuse again.
- ▶ We are nearly done creating another Abuse event which talks about all other kinds of abuse, and will follow the same rules for delivery.
- ▶ Next month we start developing our Incident Management materials for self advocates.





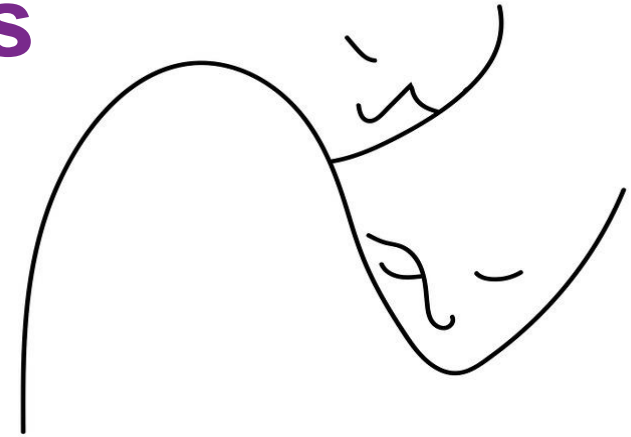
# SAPNA Moving Forward

- ▶ Because of Covid, we have not held any of these events since early 2020.
- ▶ We have no way of knowing who is in the room if we do them remotely, and no way to offer the other supports as we do in person.
- ▶ We hope to start in-person events after June 2022.



# Support considerations for Abuse events

- ▶ SAU1 asks for any providers, ARC's, or other groups to reach out to schedule our Sexual Abuse Awareness event, which needs to be held in a place with 3 accessible, private rooms:
  - A larger one for the event itself; two smaller ones for the Comfort room and the Counselor room.
- ▶ We'd especially like to partner with groups than can set up and offer an event at the same time for supporters to help them learn more about what a trauma response may look like, and what they can do to support folks.





# Why are these supports important ?

We want to share a few examples of what we have seen in person from folks who did disclose to their providers, even if not at our events about abuse.

- ▶ At one event when a self advocate shared verbal abuse she was experiencing from a staff member, the program specialist who was also at the event became angry, and said, “Why haven’t you said something before?”
- ▶ This spring we were invited to be at an ISP meeting and the self advocate spoke about abuse from quite a while ago. Right away, the supports coordinator, life coach, and program specialist all spent more than 15 minutes shaming the person that the events happened so long ago, and he should not keep using them as an “excuse.”
- ▶ At another ISP meeting when a self advocate asked about a support animal, she was told that perhaps they could start “with a goldfish” until the person proved they could take care of a “pet.”

# What can we learn from these examples?

- ▶ Each of those examples were people trying to speak up. Do you think they will speak up again?
- ▶ We hear hundreds of these stories which show a great need for trauma informed responses, and true support for people's experience.
- ▶ At the end of every event we do, we tell people to speak up – and keep speaking up - until you are listened to, until someone believes you, and until you get what you need.

# What do we need to stop abuse?

- ▶ We need to know what abuse is.
- ▶ We need to be heard.
- ▶ We need to be believed.

# What do we need to stop abuse?

- ▶ If you have ever been abused, it is never, ever your fault.
- ▶ We, and everyone supporting us, need to understand fully what consent is.
- ▶ We need to have our right to consent to anything be respected by those supporting us starting when we are young.

# What do we need to stop abuse?

- ▶ We need ongoing supports to help us work through and live with our trauma.
- ▶ We need to be fully supported to hold abusers legally responsible through the justice system.

# What do we need to stop abuse?

We need everyone to know:

- ▶ **There is no excuse for abuse.**
- ▶ **Abuse is always wrong.**

**We need every person here at the ISAC,  
and everyone connected to the system, to  
make each one of these happen.**

**We at SAU1 are ready to do our part.**

**Are you?**

**Speak up for your rights  
and the rights of others.**

**And Keep  
Speaking Up!**







**We thank you for your time today.**

**Do you have questions or comments?**

# Contact Us:

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