



Domestic Violence Advocacy for People with Disabilities

Lesson 2

**Issues facing
survivors with disabilities**



Living with a disability

Living with a disability affects the decisions a person makes.

- A person in a wheelchair does not have the option to enter a store that has stairs at the entrance.
- A person who is Deaf does not have the option of attending a meeting where there are no interpreters.
- A person who cannot read cannot fill out forms without assistance.



Living with a disability

People with disabilities who experience domestic violence often face different choices than victims who do not have a disability.

For example, abusers can threaten to withhold necessary medical care, tell her that most people see her as helpless, refuse to help her out of bed, break her wheelchair, control her communication by hiding the TTY, rearrange furniture in the home, refuse to drive her anywhere.



Living with a disability

Personal Assistance Services

In the “Disability Gulag” article, the author talks about needing support to do everyday tasks, such as going to the bathroom or cooking meals. Many people with disabilities hire people to provide them this kind of support.

Living with a disability

Personal Assistance Services

This service is called Personal Assistance Services, or PAS - and is sometimes referred to as attendant care, personal care, chore service, respite, Medicaid Personal Care, or COPES.

The PAS worker is managed and directed by the person using the services.

- excerpted from *We Choose Independence*, Project PAS-Port for Change, 2006
<https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/we-choose-independence/>

Living with a disability

Personal Assistance Services

PAS can include assistance with everyday tasks such as:

Eating;

Dressing;

Bathing;

Getting in and out of bed;

Planning a budget;

Reading the mail aloud.

- excerpted from *We Choose Independence*, Project PAS-Port for Change, 2006
<https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/we-choose-independence/>

Living with a disability

Personal Assistance Services

People who use PAS may have a physical, sensory, psychiatric or cognitive disability. They are the employer and are in charge of hiring, firing, training, and supervising the workers.

- excerpted from *We Choose Independence*, Project PAS-Port for Change, 2006
<https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/we-choose-independence/>

Living with a disability

Personal Assistance Services

However, throughout history, people with disabilities have been treated as incapable. Sometimes this old-fashioned attitude persists. Personal assistants are sometimes guilty of treating their boss like a child or as if they were incompetent. Similarly, people who use PAS sometimes feel dependent on a worker, and being treated as helpless reinforces those insecure feelings.

- excerpted from *We Choose Independence*, Project PAS-Port for Change, 2006
<https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/publications/we-choose-independence/>

Living with a disability

ADVOCACY PRACTICE

The often intimate nature of PAS means that the relationship between the worker and the person often mirrors other intimate partner relationships.

When someone in an intimate relationship tries to control the other person through fear, threats, or violence, it is domestic violence. An abuser can be a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, or a personal assistant.