

Crime Prevention for People with Disabilities

A physical disability — impaired vision, hearing, or mobility — doesn't prevent you from being a victim of crime. Common sense actions can reduce your risk.

- Stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings, whether on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving, or waiting for the bus or subway.
- Send a message that you're calm, confident, and know where you're going.
- Be realistic about your limitations. Avoid places or situations that put you at risk.
- Know the neighborhood where you live and work. Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, restaurants, or stores that are open and accessible.
- Avoid establishing predictable activity patterns. Most of us have daily routines, but never varying them may increase your vulnerability to crime.

At Home



- Put good locks on all your doors. Police recommend double-cylinder, deadbolt locks, but make sure you can easily use the locks you install.
- Install peepholes on front and back doors at your eye level. This is especially important if you use a wheelchair.
- Get to know your neighbors. Watchful neighbors who look out for you as well as themselves are a frontline defense against crime.
- If you have difficulty speaking, have a friend record a message — giving your name, address, and type of disability to use in emergencies. Keep the tape in a recorder next to your phone.
- Ask your police department to conduct a free home security survey to help identify your individual needs.

Out and About

- If possible, go with a friend.
- Stick to well-lighted, well-traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through vacant lots, wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket. If you use a wheelchair, keep your purse or wallet tucked snugly between you and the inside of the chair.
- If you use a knapsack, make sure it is securely shut.
- Always carry your medical information in case of an emergency.
- Consider keeping a cellular phone or installing a CB radio in your vehicle. On Public Transportation
- Use well-lighted, busy stops. Stay near other passengers.
- Stay alert. Don't doze or daydream.
- If someone harasses you, make a loud noise or say "Leave me alone." If that doesn't work, hit the emergency signal on the bus or train.

Take a Stand!

- Join, or help organize, a Neighborhood Watch group. Make sure their meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. For example, do they need a sign language interpreter? Can individuals who use walkers, crutches, or wheelchairs enter the meeting place?
- Work with local law enforcement to improve responses to all victims or witnesses of crime. Role-play how people with disabilities can handle threatening situations.
- Work with a rehabilitation center or advocacy groups to offer a presentation to schools and other community organizations on the needs and concerns of individuals with disabilities.