

# Barriers for Victims with Disabilities

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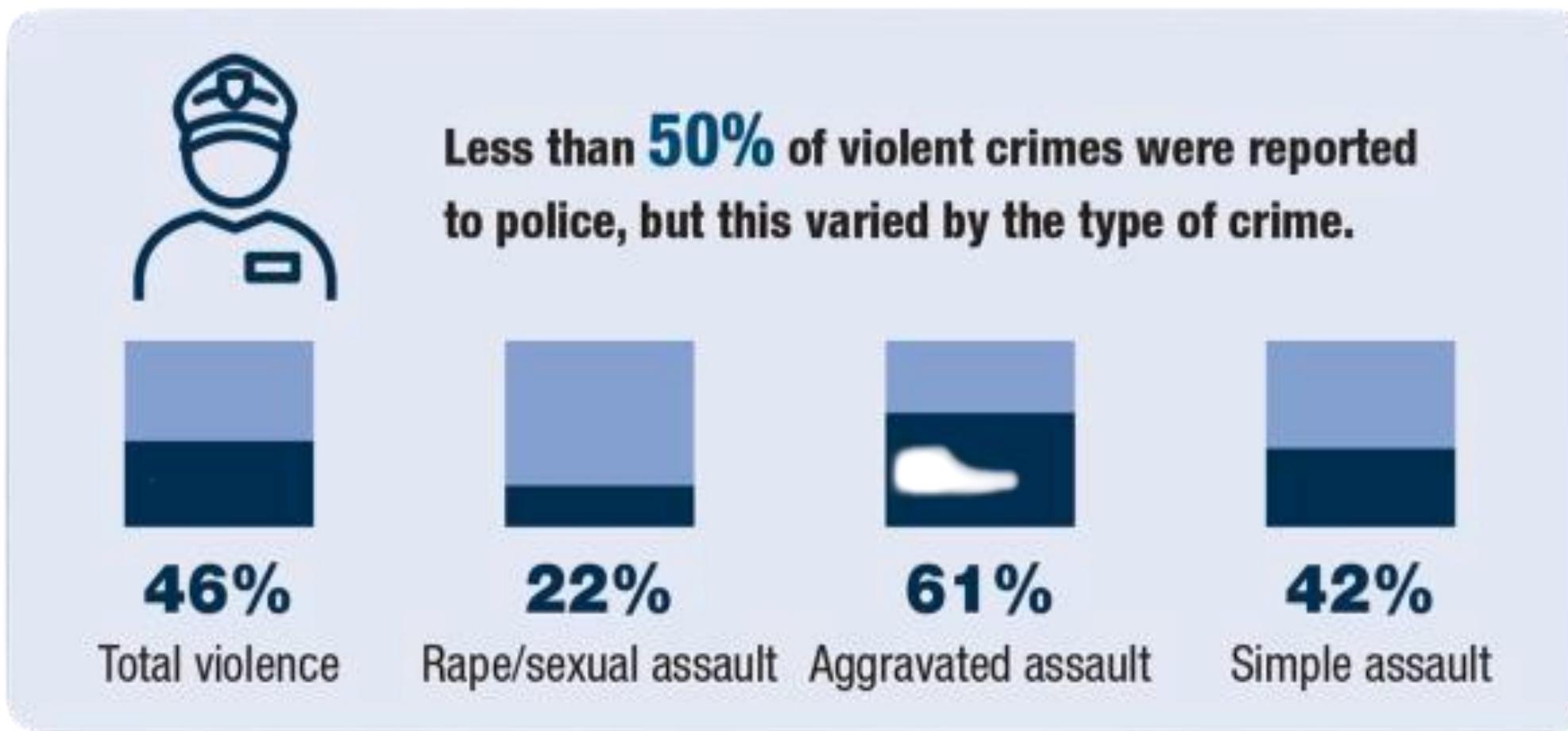
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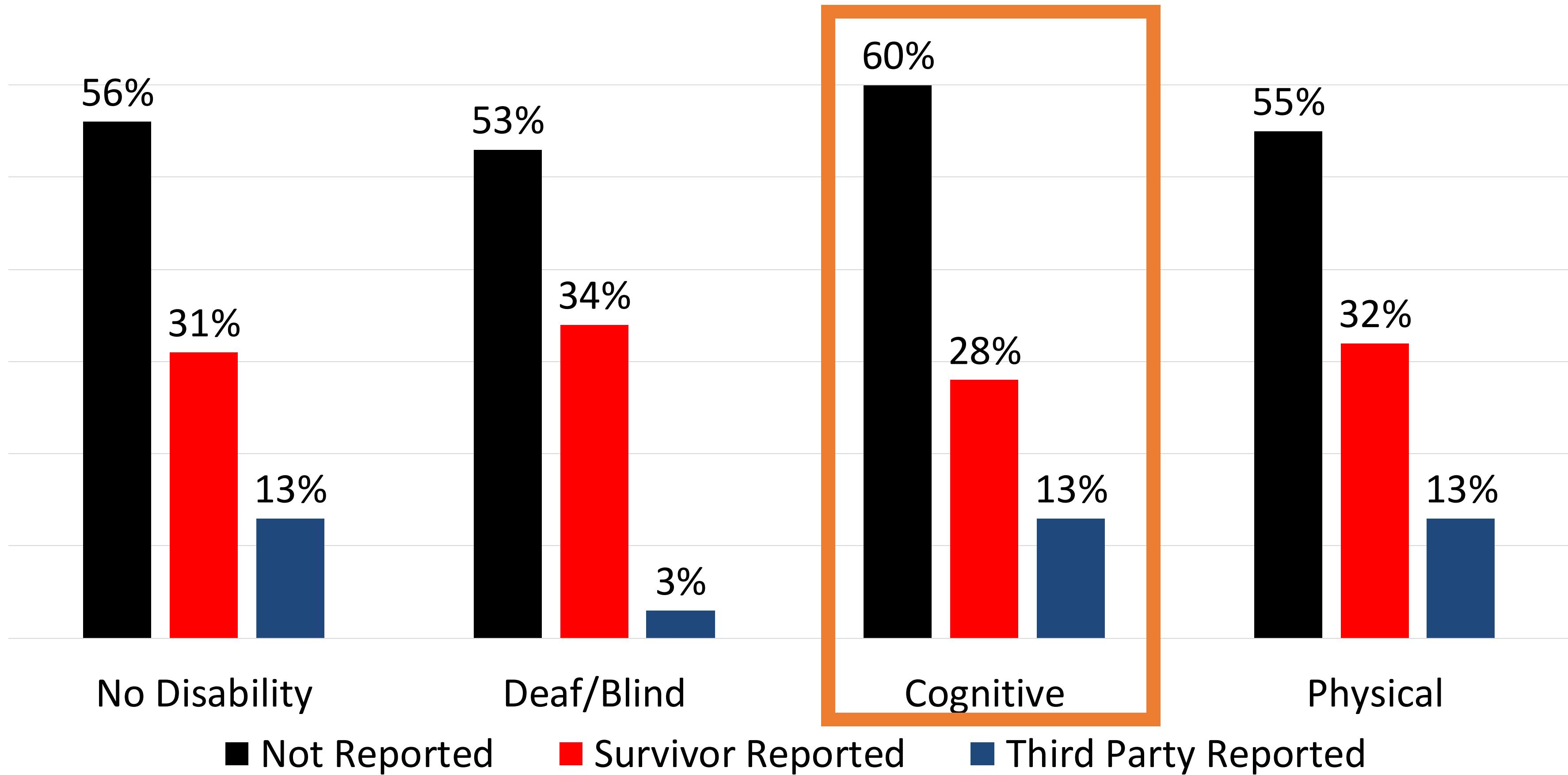
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More than  
half of all crime is  
not reported  
to the police

# Individuals with IDDs are even less likely to report



What are some reasons survivors  
might not report to the police?

# Communication

## Expressive

- Output
- Information you express or communicate for others to understand



### Examples:

- Words you say or write down
- Gestures or signs you use
- Tone or the way you say things

## Receptive

- Input
- Information you hear or see and understand



### Examples:

- Reading someone's body language
- Listening to their words
- Listening to their tone or how they say things

# Communication Supports

Communication Board



Tablet with  
Communication  
Application



Drawing Board



Your Body



# Communication Boards

TD Snap | Motor Plan      tobii dynavox

now	I	you	is	want	tell	need	watch	not	happy	sad
later	we	they	can	like	take	know	play	yes	hungry	thirsty
please	who	he	do	go	think	come	finish	no	tired	uncomfortable
thank you	what	she	have	stop	see	let's	read	more	less	again
where	when	it	help	get	give	will	wait	&	good	bad
why	how	me	make	try	feel	find	choose	bathroom	different	What I want to say is not here

# Current Project

**Goal:** To enhance access to justice for victims with IDD, fostering a society where everyone can tell their truth



# Project Components

1. Systematic review of published research

2. Policy analysis

- Victims service agencies' websites
- Police agencies' websites

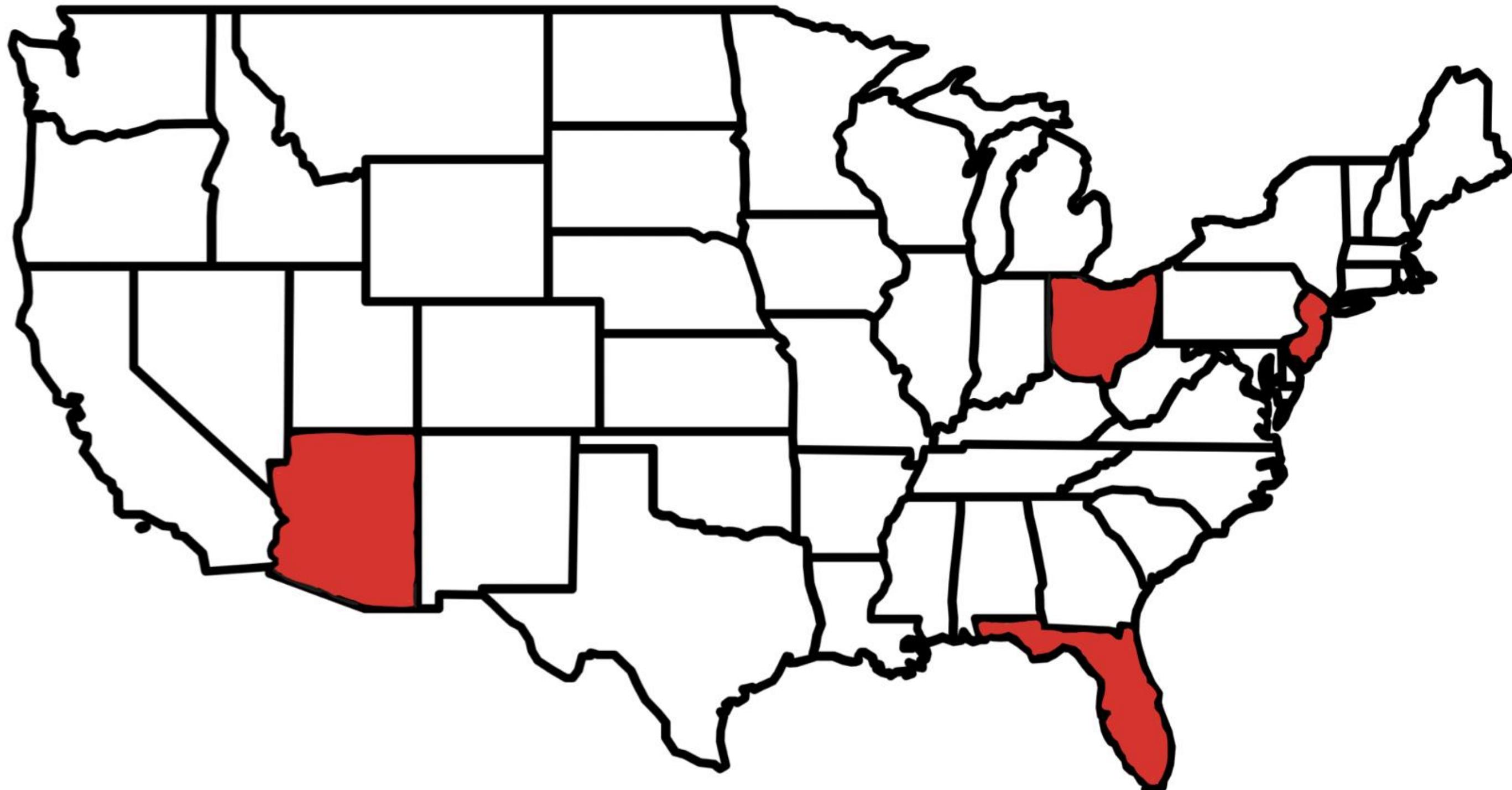
3. Interviews and focus groups (N = 153)

- Individuals with IDD
- Caretakers and parents
- Practitioners

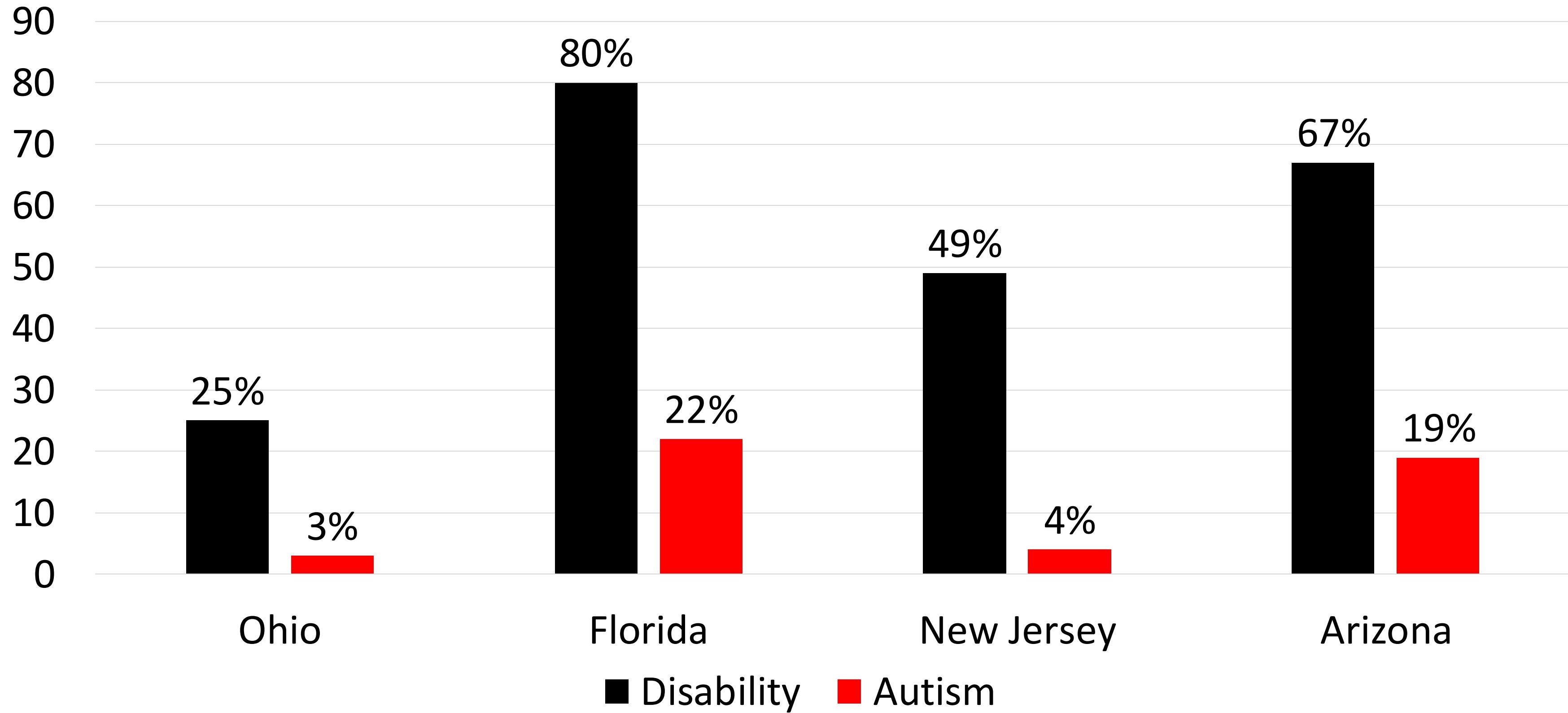


# Analysis of Victim Service Providers' Websites

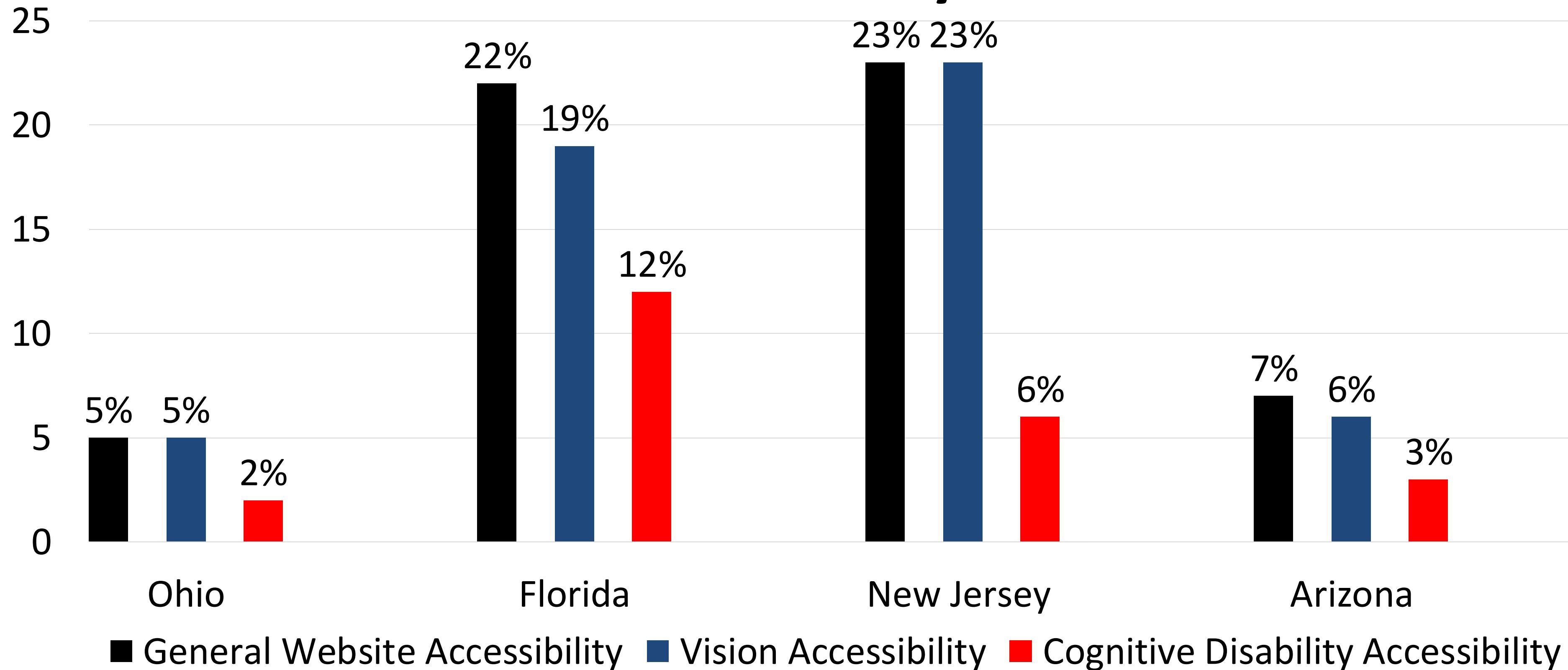
- Total Agencies (N = 795)
  - Ohio (N = 258)
  - Florida (N = 291)
  - New Jersey (N = 47)
  - Arizona (N = 199)
- Key word search
- Website features
  - Vision
  - IDD
- Readability Grade-level mean



# Percentage of Victim Service Agencies' Websites that<sup>12</sup> Mention Disability and/or Autism

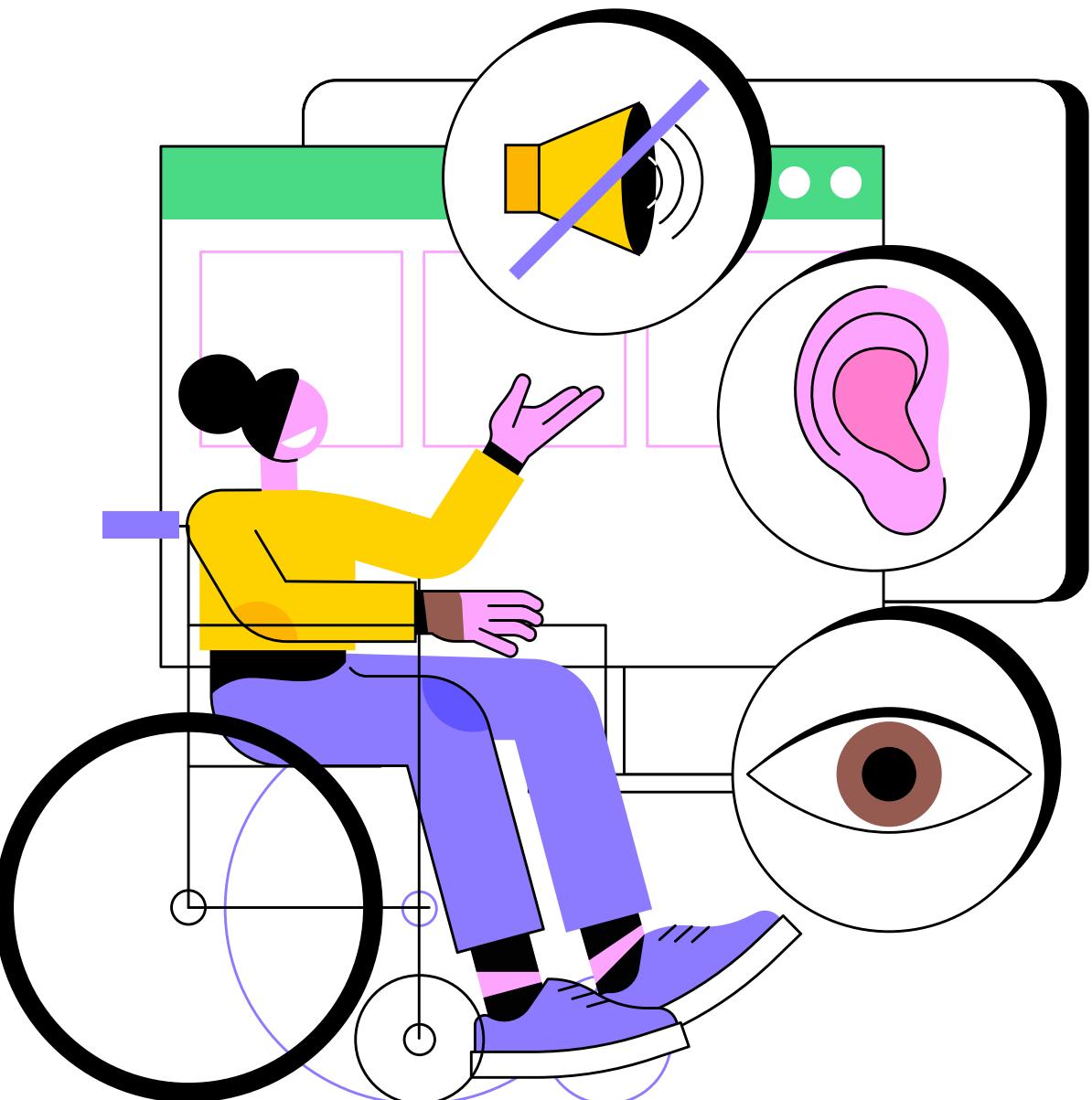


# Percentage of Victim Service Agencies' Website Accessibility



# Analysis of Victim Service Providers' Websites

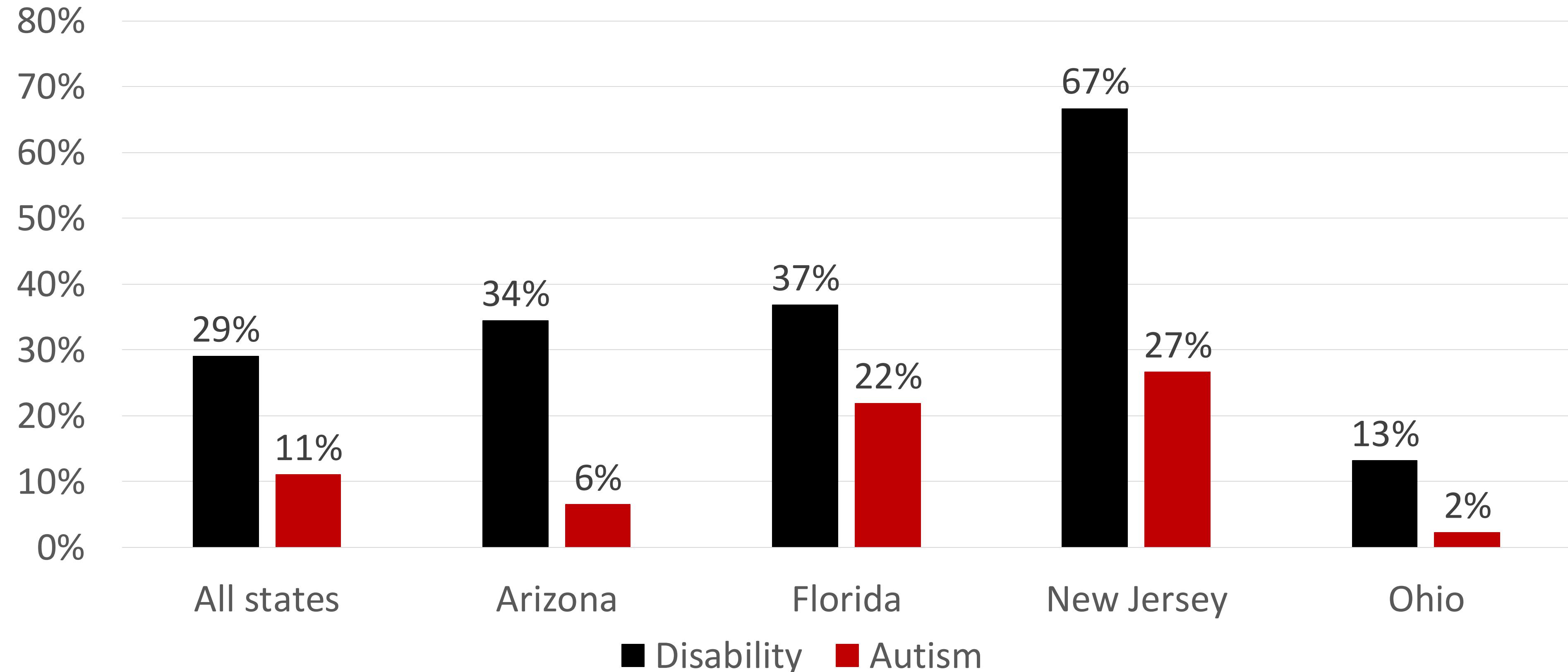
- Websites lacked **supports for individuals with IDD**
- The readability grade-level mean was between 14-15



# Analysis of Victim Service Providers' Websites

 Community Members	 Service Providers	 Service Providers
<p>I can think of material that's not large print. <b>14 plus font.</b></p> <p>Plain language materials.</p> <p><b>We need plain language....</b></p>	<p>We've got a lot of work to do - to <b>break things down</b> into more digestible pieces that people can actually process, to get things on there in different kind of modalities.</p>	<p>You can make the <b>font bigger</b>. You can have <b>audio</b>. You can take the <b>color</b> out so it's more...<b>monotone</b>.</p>

# Percentage of Law Enforcement Websites that Mention Disability and/or Autism



# Challenges to Reporting

- 1 Lack of Understanding
- 2 Isolation
- 3 Dependence/Family Dynamics
- 4 Access
- 5 (Dys)regulation
- 6 Lack of Trust
- 7 Credibility



Brittany Hayes

I'd like to discuss some  
of the broader challenges

# Communication Challenges

- 1 General Communication
- 2 Vocabulary
- 3 Cognition
- 4 Non-Speaking
- 5 Augmentative/Alternative Communication

# Communication Challenges: General Communication

20

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
<p>So my options are communicate - communicate my needs and be <b>perceived as aggressive</b>. Or <b>don't communicate</b> at all. And <b>both ways I don't get my needs met</b>.</p>	<p>They might not know how to clearly talk.</p>	<p>I think they <b>want to</b> communicate it, but maybe they <b>don't know how</b> to communicate it.</p>
<p>You <b>add the stress</b> of having a violent event happen to them, and their <b>ability to communicate is even less</b> than what it is normally.</p>	<p>Many have <b>speech and hearing challenges</b> that would <b>inhibit their ability to report</b>. Or to <b>make anyone...aware</b> of what's taken place.</p>	<p>I've been able to kind of decipher and extrapolate...what is trying to be said.</p>

# Communication Challenges: Vocabulary

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
Ask the police officer to use everyday language, <b>plain language</b> . Because when I was reporting my sexual assault to the male cop, he was giving me all this <b>police jargon</b> , and I'm not a law officer. I don't know what this police jargon means.	And they <b>don't have the right vocabulary</b> words. They're not believed, they're <b>just not believed</b> .	[We] kind of beat around the bush, or we'll use <b>more legal terminology</b> ... Well...we talk about <b>digital penetration</b> like you're thinking digital like a <b>digital clock</b> , like a calculator.
Even just having like anatomically correct body parts on a student's communication device. And it's like, yes, okay, the student did say penis very loudly, 20 times...yes, they shouldn't do that, but you know what? If you're 20 years old and you have a penis, you should be able to say penis. Like, the fact that we can't just go around yelling penis, that's another issue.	Was it actually "hit"? What is a "touch"? Those <b>simple words</b> to us, <b>may not be to them</b> .	...just talking about the <b>actual terms</b> of "vagina," "penis"...they might <b>not be familiar</b> with those terms.

# Communication Challenges: Cognition

 <b>Community Members</b>	 <b>Victim Service Providers</b>	 <b>Police</b>
<p>You still have to use...<b>plain language</b> but a simple way 'cause sometimes they might not get it, but the, the, uh, thinking a lot. So, you have to take their time to think. Cause sometimes they have a communication devices and sometimes the communication device doesn't work the same way our brains. I know that.</p>	<p>Some of them may <b>lack the cognition to follow that process</b>. When you call our hotline, you have to push 1, 2, 3, or 4 [for] what agency you're calling. I've had people say they didn't know which number to push, and then they didn't understand the questions that our statewide intake was asking them. So just following that process of getting that intake in, making the phone call.</p>	<p>Depending on who it is, they might <b>not totally understand</b> what's being asked at that time. Some questions might be <b>context dependent</b> and they might not be able to understand the context of a questions.</p>
<p>I also <b>process things a lot slower</b>....I have a hard time reading emotions with people...but I just don't know subtlety very well. I think that it's really easy for me to be <b>taken advantage of</b> in that way.</p>	<p>I don't like assuming that someone with an IDD isn't going to understand. So I like to go through the whole thing. Do you understand? Have them <b>repeat it back</b> in their own words, so I can <b>gauge their comprehension</b> level.</p>	<p>There's challenges just learning to understand of <b>when to get the authorities involved</b> and <b>when not to</b> get them involved.</p>

# Communication Challenges: Non-Speaking

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
<p>You know, when you're stressed, you lose your words. When you're anxious, you lose your words, you know? So any supports that...can replace the words that you lose, would be great.</p>	<p>It's automatically <b>assumed</b> that [people with IDDs] <b>don't communicate</b> and [the police] <b>don't attempt all of the others methods</b> that you're talking about.</p> <p>Well, did you ask them <b>simple yes/no questions</b>? Did you even see that they can <b>blink</b> once for "yes"?...Did you provide them a <b>picture diagram</b> to where they could <b>point</b> to things?</p>	<p>How are you supposed to prove sexual assault in that situation when they can't even articulate what happened because of their mental capacity is such that they can't even speak?</p>
<p>It's always unsubstantiated because she's nonverbal and can't name a perpetrator. Yeah, there might be something going on here, but there's nothing we can do.</p>	<p>I said, "How does your dad's girlfriend, how does she make you feel?" And he just kept hitting his button on the soundboard to the judge. "Fear, fear, fear, fear." And the judge was like...he granted it... I said in the hearing to the judge..."Your honor, I know my client has very limited communication skills." He said, "Stop right there. I think your client did a fantastic job.</p>	<p>I would say that would be one of my fears though, of going onto a call and I had not had an interaction with somebody who's nonverbal yet. So that would be tough.</p>

I said, "How does your dad's girlfriend, how does she make you feel?"  
And he just kept hitting his button on the soundboard to the judge.

"Fear, fear, fear, fear."

And the judge was like...he granted it...  
I said in the hearing to the judge..."Your honor, I know my client has very  
limited communication skills."

He said, "Stop right there. I think your client did a fantastic job."





Brittany Hayes

# Communication Challenges: Augmentative & Alternative Communication

 <b>Community Members</b>	 <b>Victim Service Providers</b>	 <b>Police</b>
<p>I use <b>pictures</b>. I carry just <b>cards</b> with me that just say "I struggle to communicate. Thank you for your patience with me. I have autism."</p> <p>I do a <b>lot of front loading for people</b> when I enter situations...I actually have a communication device when things are really bad, because I do have selective mutism, and if I reach a certain level, then I actually am physically unable to communicate. So I do use pictures and writing and a communication device.</p>	<p>We had another kiddo and he had millions of icons. And he's a little expert on that page and could go around in circles. But again, he is still <b>limited</b> by that because he <b>did not have words programmed</b> in like "victim" wasn't there. "Assault" wasn't in there. "Hit" was in there.</p>	<p>I have [used AAC cards]...I've used them a couple of times when I've been trying to establish communication.</p>
<p>Sometimes I use AAC to speak, um, and so, like, when [I] use AAC, I <b>don't feel as heard</b>.</p>	<p>And she's on her device. And I <b>waited seven minutes for her to say something</b>. And she didn't verbalize anything to me. She just typed out, "<b>I'm scared</b>."</p> <p>And it took seven minutes for me to sit there in silence, patiently waiting for her to type whatever she was-, I thought it was gonna be a multiple sentences, but it was just, "I'm scared." So I used that as a "Let's go with why you're scared.</p>	<p>[Police] have their own personalities. They have this timeline that they had to go through and spending time with the person that's using a board or using a <b>different type of communication</b> device...and they're <b>not used to it</b>. They get <b>very impatient</b>. So sometimes they can get mean because they want to get right to the point.</p>

# Accommodations

- 1 Communication Adjustment
- 2 Plain Language
- 3 Slow Down/Build Rapport
- 4 Be Flexible

# Accommodations: Communication Adjustment

 <b>Community Members</b>	 <b>Victim Service Providers</b>	 <b>Police</b>
<p>I'll ask him to describe it to me, and then I just kind of try to ask more <b>clarifying, open-ended questions</b>, and then it kind of like, I'm like, is it this? Are you saying this? And then be like, yes, that.</p>	<p>I give a lot of extra time, I do a lot of <b>reframing, rewording, checking back in</b> to make sure that what I said is clear and understandable</p>	<p>I always tell officers use <b>first-then language</b>, right. "First, we're gonna do this and then we're gonna do this" 'cause now you've <b>broken down</b> your commands of what's gonna happen first and then next. So you've <b>taken the uncertainty out</b> of the interview.</p>
<p>Maybe you're pulling different strategies, <b>tools from your tool box</b> at different times...being able to assess what and how do they critically assess what tool might or might not <b>work with that individual</b> in the moment.</p>	<p>And if you find that they still don't understand, you have to <b>reward it</b>...You will run into that no matter what age, even if you don't have IDD.</p>	<p>So if that's <b>what they're capable of</b> communicating to us, then that's <b>what you work with</b>.</p>
<p><b>Being able to ask my own questions to specify</b>, are we talking about this? Do you mean this? And unfortunately, court is not a space that you get to do that. Turns out, "I ask the questions" is a term you'll hear a lot.</p>	<p>Then I would <b>break it down</b>. And then I'd say, "Do you understand that? Or do you want me to say it a different way?" Oftentimes I would <b>put the misunderstanding on me</b>.</p>	<p>If they don't understand the first explanation, telling them the first explanation a second time doesn't do anything. <b>You have to repackage it</b>.</p>

# Accommodations: Plain Language

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
Ok, instead of asking like "Did you see a <b>aggravated assault</b> ?" You can be like, "Did you see that person <b>hit someone</b> ?"	Having <b>information that's broken down</b> where anyone can understand it... So I created these little pamphlets right here for prosecutors to pass out. It's <b>very easy to understand</b> . So we try to create or find <b>multiple ways to access</b> information.	Those are the kind of things that I try to do at this point. Try to use simple language. Instead of me talking about a police report and going through all other details on what they can do, just using <b>simple, short phrases</b> . So it gets to the point and I don't overwhelm them either with the information I'm sharing.
I don't know what terms cops use when they're having a conversation. I don't know if they're using like, the <b>jargon</b> that they're using, but plain language could help.	That's also something that I've had to work with – is like, how can I make my <b>communication clearer</b> ? A lot more <b>simpler and direct</b> ?	We use <b>simpler terminology</b> . I'm not gonna use acronyms or try to get too complicated with them.



Brittany Hayes

Kecia, you told me  
about how plain language

University of  
**CINCINNATI**

# Accommodations: Slow Down and Build Rapport

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
<p>“Hey, I got some Pokémon cards for you. You want to come and sit over here?” And, you know, it's that <b>little thing</b> that <b>made a difference</b>, but *shakes head*....</p>	<p>That's the hardest part, I think, with a lot of other systems is they become <b>frustrated</b> when they're trying to get that person on the same page. 'Cause it takes a <b>couple tries</b>.</p>	<p>Eventually finds that item that helps him deescalate, and eventually he's sitting down next to the sergeant on a curb and they're just talking, right? No use of force, no ambulance ride, right? Successful interaction, deescalated. He grew an attachment to the kit, so they had to give him the whole thing, but so be it. I said, <b>don't ruin the rapport you've just built</b>. Just give him it. We'll replace anything in there.</p>
<p>You know, that's a good accommodation— <b>Time</b>.</p>	<p>Being able to choose the <b>space</b> in which they report and <b>extra time</b> are the two most important things for my investigations.</p>	<p>Hey, even if someone is in kind of an emotional emergency, step back. Take a deep breath. You got time now. <b>Time is on your side</b>... You can begin to ask questions. You can begin to assess... then you may see something that is different than how you may have been trained, in terms of how to deal with or how to handle someone in an emotional crisis that is, at what's considered a ten.</p>

You know, that's  
a good accommodation – Time.





Brittany Hayes

# Accommodations: Adaptability

 Community Members	 Victim Service Providers	 Police
<p>There's <b>variation even within myself</b>, and then of course, there's variation <b>within the IDD community</b>.</p>	<p>What is <b>accommodating for one</b> individual can <b>not be accommodating for the next</b>.</p>	<p>Oftentimes, when you take the <b>one size fits all approach</b>, what you find is it causes a lack of communication. It is a <b>communication inhibitor</b>...it inhibits the ability to understand, because I'm expecting you to understand what I'm saying as it relates to how we do things, and that may not be the case.</p>
<p>A lot of those accommodations I didn't need...But it's like, <b>everybody's gonna need something different</b>.</p>	<p>I would just want to be able to share the hardest thing I've ever shared in a way that makes me <b>feel comfortable</b></p>	<p>I like to bring them <b>written information</b> and write things down for them a lot, like you mentioned how you <b>didn't want to miss anything</b> so you're recording the call. I want them to be able to concentrate on what we're talking about, not worrying about taking notes and writing numbers down.</p>

He inherited a lot of kids with autism or young adults. And he had one that after a year, ...this person was in therapy 'cause they were going to the ER all the time. And he took 'em in and all they did was play Legos.

They built Legos together during their 50-minute sessions. And at the end of a year, he said, "You know, all I'm doing is building Legos for an hour a day. I kind of enjoy it, but I'm not sure I'm really doing any good."

And the mother said, "He hasn't been to the ER for nine months."

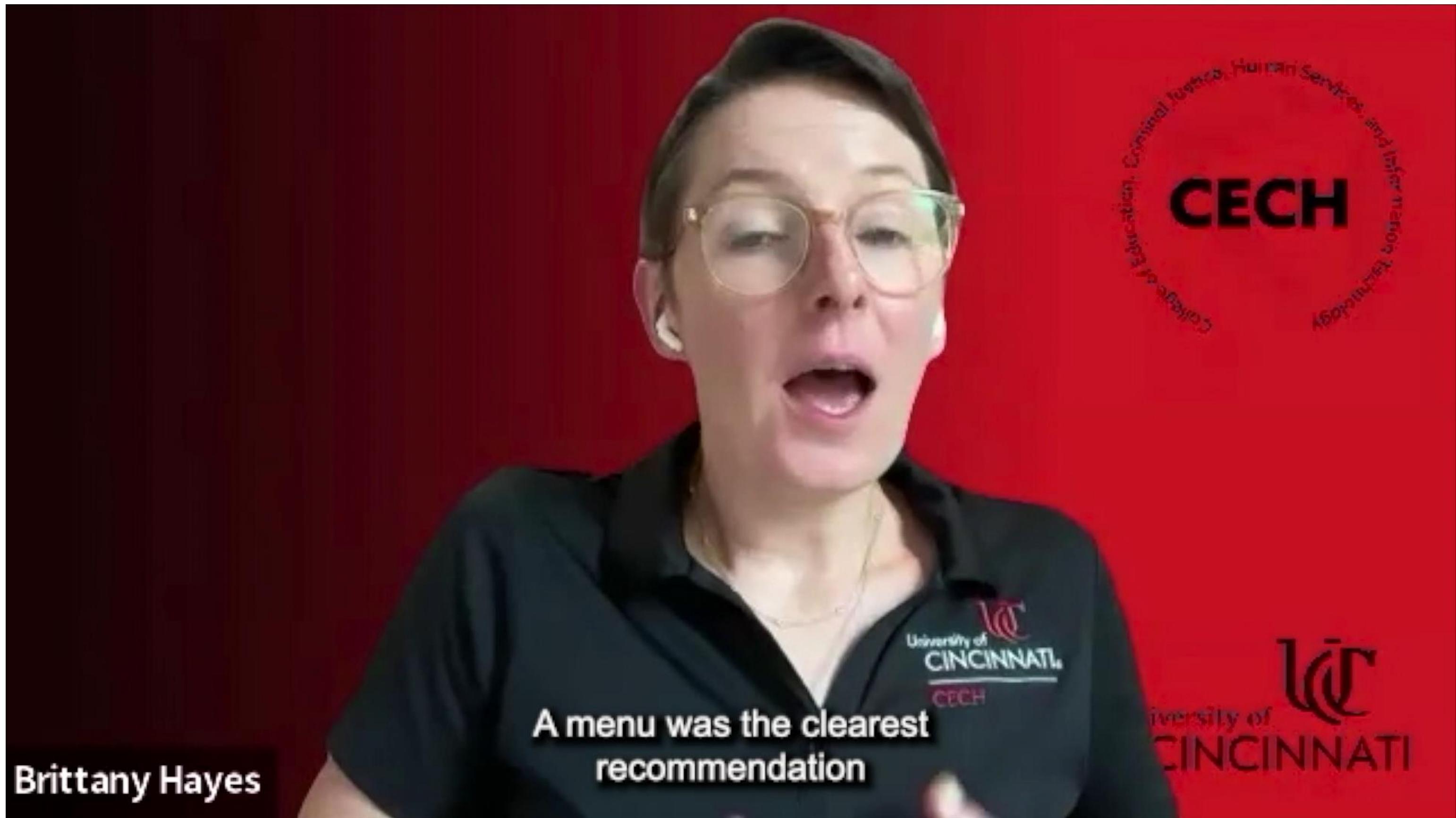


# Recommendations

- 1 Interagency Coordination
- 2 Education/Awareness
- 3 Plan Ahead/Be Prepared
- 4 Menu

# Recommendations: Menu

 <b>Community Members</b>	 <b>Victim Service Providers</b>	 <b>Police</b>
<p>Um, the IDD need <b>choices</b>. Um, and I think you should give them a <b>step-by-step</b>.</p>	<p>Here's the, basically like the <b>map</b> of things. But also here's like the really small part of the map, because maybe we're only understanding <b>one step at a time</b>.</p>	<p>As far as people with IDD reporting, I think that's great - if there's a <b>menu</b> that they can operate on</p>
<p>Either somebody saying like, "Well, these are your <b>choices</b> and this is what will happen if you make those <b>choices</b>," or a resource that tells me that...some kind of simple text, <b>plain text</b>, like very <b>easily accessible document</b>.</p>	<p>I would love to see <b>something put together</b> with like, <b>explaining the legal process</b>, like so they understand it. Like I said, it's hard for me to even understand for crying out loud, you know, I'm just a neurodivergent. I don't have all the other things. It's hard for me to understand. Right? So it's like, I would like maybe kind of something that explains that. I know that's one thing that we don't have.</p>	<p>Students should <b>know about all the resources</b> we have, because we can help <b>make the process easier</b>, and especially someone with the IDD, they may not know that, "oh, we have a non-emergency number you can call. We can work-, you know, walk you through how to do the report," even if it's something as easy as a stolen item. We have online forms, if there's someone who struggles with in person communication. So, I just think, not knowing the resources available to them might be another reason ...what's the next step with the-, you know, like, <b>what's the next step</b>?</p>
<p>[If] someone should hurt you, this is what you need to do. <b>Step one, step two</b> – and explain things like that.</p>	<p>But I will say, <b>having nothing right now is not working</b>. So, you know, implementing something is definitely beneficial.</p>	<p>In the case of medical emergencies or even otherwise, do you have <b>something put together</b> that is current for conditions, medications, <b>best tips</b> for communication? Do you have a <b>packet</b> that you can hand this person who is taking whomever, wherever? That goes a long way.</p>



Brittany Hayes

A menu was the clearest  
recommendation

Either somebody saying like, “Well, these are your choices and this is what will happen if you make those choices,” or a resource that tells me that...some kind of simple text, plain text, like very easily accessible document



# Application

Your bicycle has been stolen.

- How would you use each communication support to report the crime?
- Why might it be hard to report the crime to police?



## Things to Consider...

- What time was it stolen?
- What type of bike was it?
- When was the last time you saw and/or used the bike?

# The Research Process

**Research *with* the disability community**

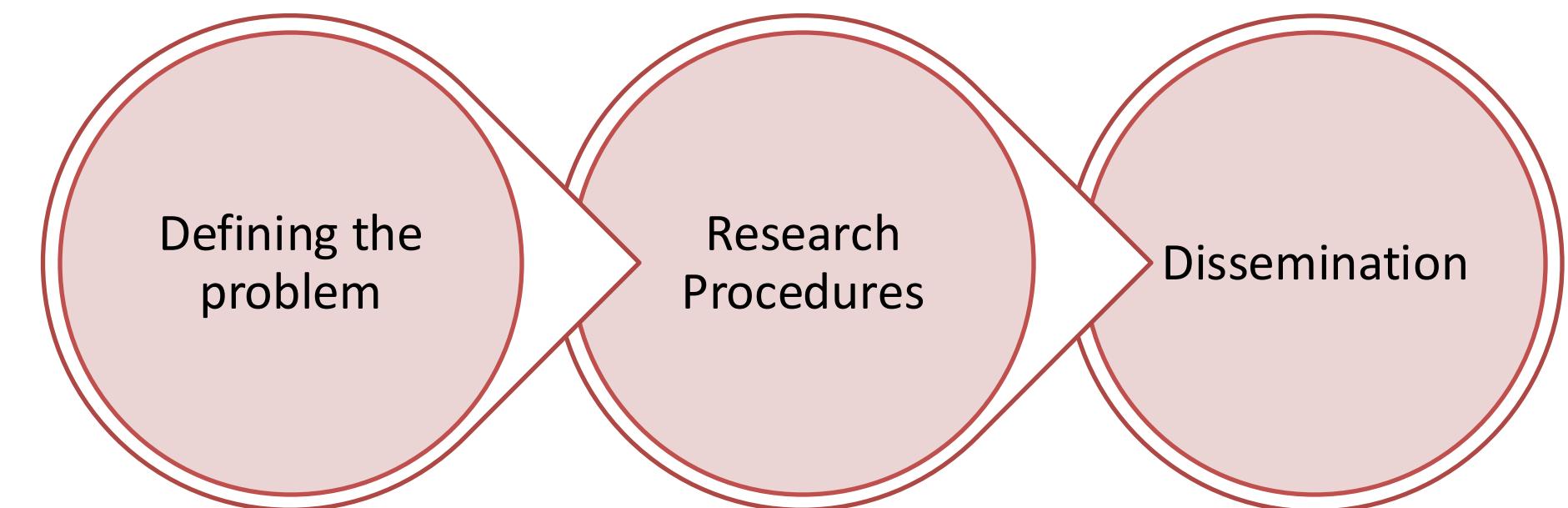
**“Nothing about us without us”**



# Working with the community as research partners

- **Lived experience is expertise**
- Practice-based guidelines for including individuals with IDD as research partners
- Guidelines emphasize transparency, effective communication, flexibility

Involve individuals with IDD in all aspects of the research process



# Plain language example: Recruitment flyer

## Original flyer



**Help us make a difference for crime victims with disabilities**

By participating in this study, you can be part of a new project that is helping crime victims with disabilities. Help us find out the challenges they face when trying to report crime.

We will conduct interviews and focus groups with:

- victims with intellectual and developmental disorders (IDD) who have experienced domestic or sexual violence
- the disability community (individuals with IDD, supporters, caregivers)
- those who work with victims of domestic or sexual violence or work with individuals with IDD

Participation is voluntary and confidential. You can choose to speak with us in a 60 minute, one-on-one interview or in a collaborative focus group, both hosted virtually on Zoom. Individuals with IDD and the disability community will receive a \$25 gift certificate for participating.

Questions?  
email: [author@email.edu](mailto:author@email.edu)  
call or text: 555-555-5555


CLICK HERE


To sign up for the study, click on the link above or open your phone's camera and point it at the QR code.

UC IRB 2023-0864 | *Language Access Barriers to Justice Among Victims of Violence Against Women with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* study is being led by Brittany Hayes (UC), Ráchael Powers (USF), Amanda Simmons (UC), and Leigh Anne McKingsley (The Arc) with funding by the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW: O-OVW-2023-171728)

**Help us make a difference for crime victims with disabilities**

We will conduct interviews and focus groups with:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Supporters or caregivers
- Those who work with victims and disabilities

Participation is voluntary and confidential. We'll ask you questions about how you think reporting could be better.

You can choose to speak with us in a 60 minute, one-on-one interview or in a small group. Either will be hosted virtually on Zoom.

Individuals with disabilities, supporters, and caregivers will get a giftcard.

Questions?  
email: [author@email.edu](mailto:author@email.edu)  
call or text: 555-555-5555


CLICK HERE


To sign up for the study, click on the link above or open your phone's camera and point it at the QR code.

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## Revised flyer



# Communication Supports in Research

- Communication supports before and during interviews
  - Visual schedules and social stories
  - Provide participants information on what will occur during the interview or focus group
    - Clarifies expectations, allows control over one's environment, improves independence and respects autonomy



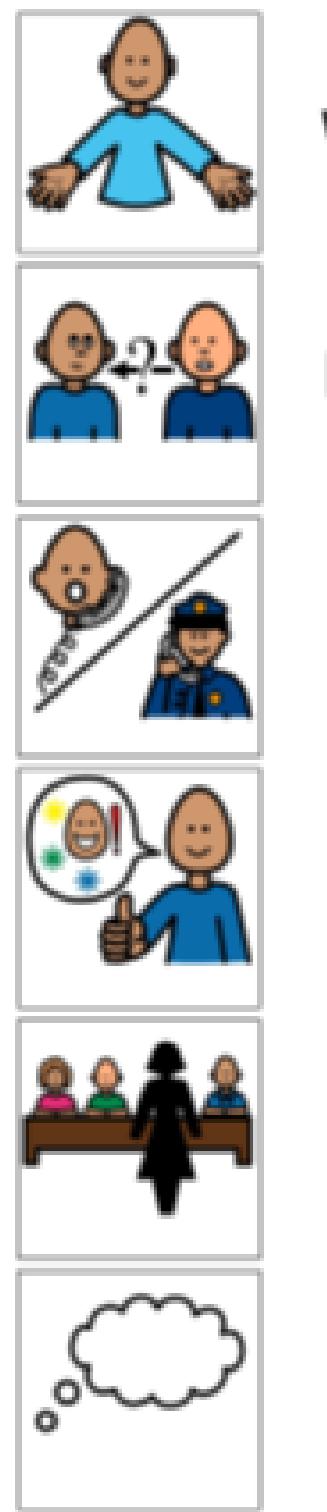
Brittany Hayes

I want to get your view  
on how we supported

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# Communication support example: Visual schedule

Original  
version



Welcome!

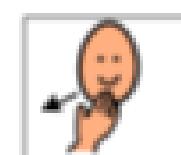
Background questions

Barriers to reporting

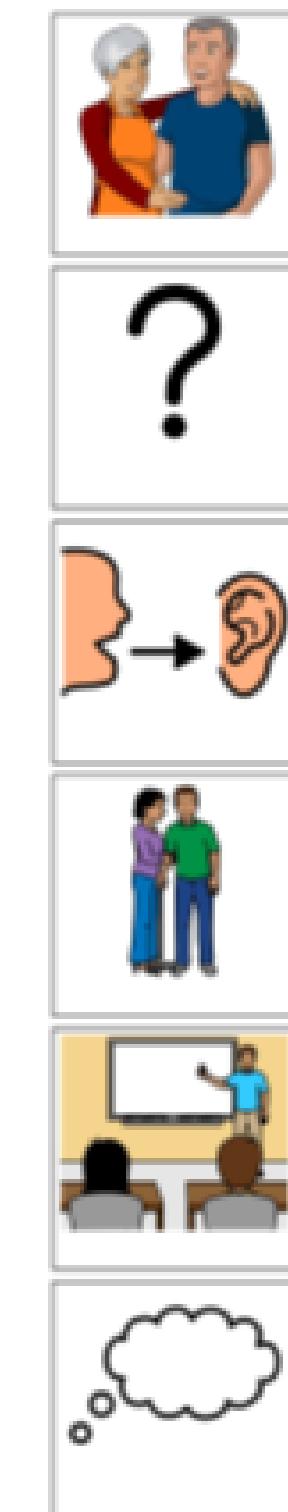
Supports

Training and policies

Final thoughts



Revised  
version



Welcome!

Background questions

Barriers to reporting

Supports

Training and policies

Final thoughts



# Dissemination

- Populations impacted are not reached
- “Academese” is hard to understand
- Include individuals with IDD as co-authors and co-presenters
- Create multiple ways for people to engage with the research
  - Infographics
- We often think of dissemination as the final and separate step
  - Emphasize early dissemination



For examples, please visit our website.

# Infographic example: Police policies for IDD

## POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES( IDD)

Approximately  
**50%**  
of all persons killed by police  
have some form of disability.



Police often misinterpret IDD as intoxication or aggression;  
policies can help shape officer behavior.



Approximately **20%** of police departments in the  
United States **do not** have any IDD-related policies.



Most police policies relating to disability **do not** involve  
victims or the public.

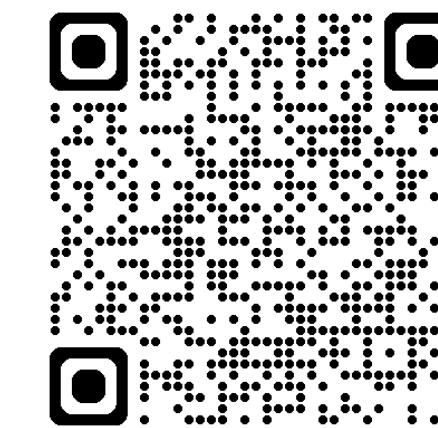
- Disability policies are often **internal/administrative**  
**policies** relating to **staff**.
  - Hiring, promotion, drug testing, etc.



Police departments with a **community policing plan**  
are more likely to have IDD-related policies.

For all of our infographics, articles,  
and to follow our project, please  
visit our website -

<https://sites.google.com/view/iddci>



# What Can You Do To Help?

- Familiarize yourself with resources tailored for folks with IDDs
  - *The Arc* has local chapters
  - National organizations like *Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)*, or the *National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)*
- Get involved with organizations and police departments





**Brittany Hayes**

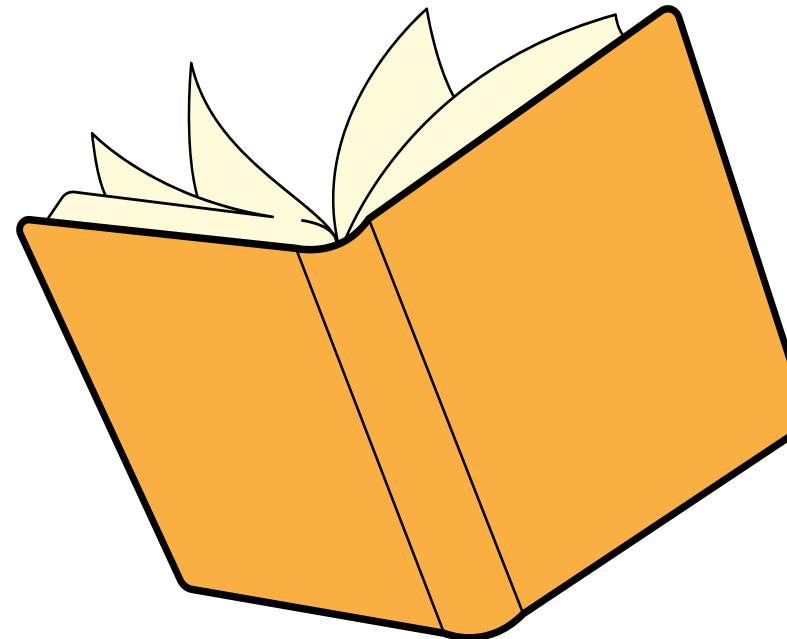
# What Are We Doing to Help?



Accessible  
Materials



Equitable  
Wages



Authorship



Empower Community & Self Advocacy

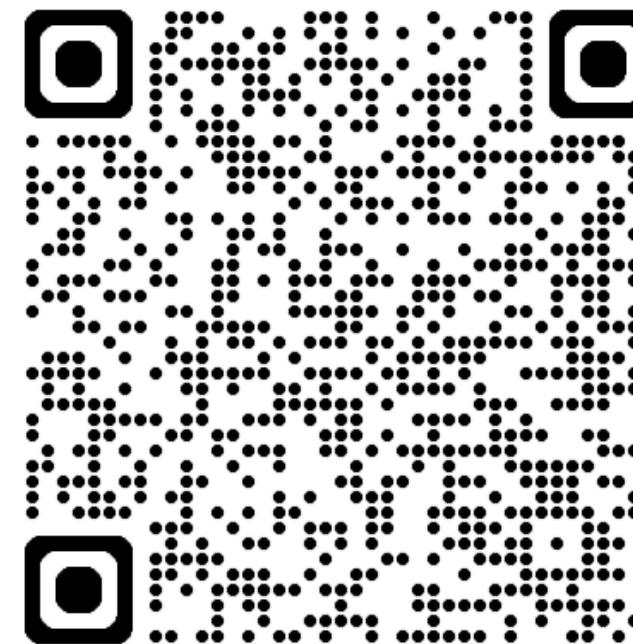


Co-development

If you want more information about the study or have questions about our research, please contact us:

**OVW Group**

[victimswithIDD@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:victimswithIDD@ucmail.uc.edu)



If you have been impacted by violence, here are some resources to help:

**Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**  
Call or Text: 988

*Specifically for Individuals with IDD:*  
**The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD)**  
Call: 202-534-3700  
<https://thearc.org/request-assistance-form/>  
[NCCJDinfo@thearc.org](mailto:NCCJDinfo@thearc.org)