

Protect Yourself



**Crime Prevention
Tips for People
with Disabilities**

Don't be a crime victim. Look out for yourself!

A physical or mental disability will not prevent you from being a crime victim. In fact, the opposite is true. The more vulnerable you are the more likely you are to be a target for criminals.

There are things people with disabilities can do to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of a crime. Common sense and the following information can do much to help reduce the risk of attack. You can also contact your local police department for additional information about programs in your area for persons with disabilities provided by law enforcement and other agencies.

Many police departments provide free escort services. For instance, it can be risky after hours when you are leaving your office, waiting at the bus stop, or getting into your home. Simply call the police department and an officer will come and stand by until you are safely out of the building, taxi or other safe location. Other general crime prevention measures are:

- ◆ Carry medical information on you in case of emergency. Keep a list of emergency names and numbers with you;
- ◆ Seek assistance when you need it. You're not giving up your independence by asking for help;
- ◆ Stay alert and pay attention to your surroundings, whether on the street, in an office building or a shopping mall, driving or waiting for a bus, and
- ◆ Send the message that you're calm, confident and know where you're going. At the same time, be realistic about your limitations. Avoid places or situations that put you at risk.

Above all, avoid establishing predictable activity patterns. Most of us have daily routines. Never varying that routine may increase your vulnerability to crime.

At Home –In an emergency, dial 911. Stay on the line until the police arrive. Do not open your door for someone you don't

know. If someone persists on knocking at your door and doesn't leave, call the police department and have them come check out the suspicious person.

Have good locks put on all your doors including those in your bedroom. The police normally recommend double cylinder dead bolt locks. Install peepholes on front and back doors at your eye level. This is especially important for people in wheelchairs.

Have a telephone in your bedroom. Place all telephones at reachable levels.

If you hear someone trying to break into your home, lock yourself in your bedroom and call the police. Stay on the line until the police arrive.

Install a 911 light. This light, controlled from a switch inside the home, enables you to make your porch lights flash in an emergency.

If you have difficulty speaking, have a friend record a message to use in emergencies. Make certain the message includes your name, address and type of disability. Contact your local law enforcement agency and let them know of your disability.

Have your local law enforcement agency conduct a home security survey to determine your exact needs for better security measures.

Out and About – There are a number of ways you can protect yourself outside of your home or workplace. For example, call your destination before you leave and let them know you're on your way. Let your friends and family know where you are going and what route you're taking if you're not meeting someone at your destination. In case you have an accident, the police should know where to begin to look for you.

Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by its straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket. If you use a wheelchair, keep the purse or wallet tucked snugly between you and the inside of the chair.

Try to travel during daylight hours only and stick to well-lit, well-traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through vacant lots, wooded areas, parking lots or alleys.

Consider installing a cellular phone or CB radio in your vehicle and carry a hand-held alarm to help you attract attention if someone is causing you a problem.

On Public Transportation – If you use public transportation, introduce yourself to the drivers and explain your disability. These drivers will be happy to assist you. In addition, use well-lit, busy stops and stay near other passengers. Stay alert and don't doze or daydream.

Before Going on Vacation – Put lights and a radio on timers to create the illusion that someone is at home. Leave shades, blinds and curtains in normal positions. Ask a neighbor to pick up your mail and stop newspaper, mail and other delivery services until you return. Leave copies of the numbers of your passport, driver's license, credit cards and traveler's checks with a friend or relative in case you need to replace these items.

Don't Let a Con Artist Rip You Off – Each year millions of people are ripped off by con artists selling miracle cures and amazing devices that aid in recovery. They're aware that many people with disabilities are hoping for a miracle cure. Don't spend your money on false hopes and "snake oil".

Be wary of high pressure tactics, the need for quick decisions, demands for cash only or high yield low risk investments. Before you buy any medication or device, call your family physician, any of the many agencies that serve people with developmental disabilities, the Arkansas Attorney General's Department of Consumer Affairs, the local Better Business Bureau or ask your family and friends if they know the company or have heard of the product.

Remember, when in doubt, check it out. Don't let greed or desperation overcome common sense. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Get Involved – Join or help organize a Neighborhood Watch group. Make certain meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.

Work with local law enforcement officials to improve response to all victims or witnesses of crime. Role-play so that people with disabilities can learn how to handle threatening situations.

Last, but certainly not least, work with rehabilitation centers or advocacy groups to develop and present programs at schools, civic organizations and community groups that help the public better understand the needs and concerns of people with disabilities.

More Information

National Easter Seal Society

230 West Morrow, Suite 1800, Chicago, IL 60606

800-221-6827 ♦ 312-726-6200 ♦ 812-726-4258 TDD

Paralyzed Veterans of America

801 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008

800-424-8200 ♦ 202-872-1300

United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc.

1600 L Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036

800-USA-5UCP V/TT ♦ 202-842-1266 V/TT

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

1801 L. Street, NW, Washington, DC 20507

202-663-4900 ♦ 202-663-4494 TDD

U.S. Department of Justice

Office on the Americans With Disabilities Act, Civil Rights
Division, P.O. Box 66118, Washington, DC 20035-6118

ADA Hotline 202-514-0301 ♦ 202-514-0383 TDD

Arkansas Easter Seal Society

3920 Woodland Heights, Little Rock, AR 72212

501-227-3600 ♦ 501-227-3686 TDD

Arkansas Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Bldg. 65, Fort Root, North Little Rock, AR 72115

501-370-3848

United Cerebral Palsy Association of Arkansas, Inc.

9720 North Rodney Parham Road, Little Rock, AR 72227

501-224-6067

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

425 West Capitol, Little Rock, AR 72201

800-669-3362 ♦ 800-800-3302 TDD

Crime prevention tips provided by the
National Crime Prevention Council
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Washington, D.C. 20006-3817

Arkansas
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C O I

COUNCIL

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5800 West 10th, Suite 805

Little Rock, AR 72204

(501) 661-2569 ♦ TDD (800) 285-1131