

Children with Disabilities' Rate of Sexual Abuse Disclosure and Subsequent Outcomes: An Exploratory Study

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Background

- Studies have shown that children with disabilities are more at risk to be sexually assaulted than their typically developing peers.
- Although it is widely acknowledged that disclosure rates involving the sexual assault of children is a major concern, little is known about the prevalence of disclosure rates amongst children with developmental disabilities.
- Research is limited on this topic of sexual abuse regarding children with disabilities.
- Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) facilitate an increase in multidisciplinary coordination in sexual abuse investigations.

Objectives

- Examined characteristics of children with disabilities who make a sexual abuse disclosure and are seen in CACs in NY State.
- Gathered information on the outcomes of those cases involving children with disabilities.
- Compared rates of abuse, disclosure, and outcomes between children who have disabilities and children who do not have disabilities.
- Compared rates of abuse disclosure and outcomes by NY counties.

Methods

- Successfully completed IRB Research Protocol.
- Contacted all 44 CAC's in New York through a listserv email requesting a deidentified aggregate report from the NCAtrak of all children seen from January 2014 to December 2016.
- Completed descriptive data analysis.

Community Partners

- **Fred Green, JD** Chief of the Special Prosecution Unit, District Attorney's Office
- **Wayne Humphrey, JD** Deputy County Attorney, Westchester County Attorney's Office
- **Danielle Weisberg, LCSW** Director of Children's Advocacy Center at WIHD

Demographics

- CAC Response Rate: 4 CAC Centers
- Number of Cases: 557 Buffalo, 108 Putnam, 148 Troy, 750 Westchester
- $n = 1511$; 12% were identified as having one or more developmental disabilities
- Gender: 23% males, 77% females
- Age: 29% 3-6 years old, 37% 7-12 years old, 34% 13-20 years old
- Race: 37% White, 29% Hispanic/Latino, 25% African American, 8% Other, 0.006% Native American/Alaskan, 0.003% Asian/Pacific Islander

Overall Outcomes

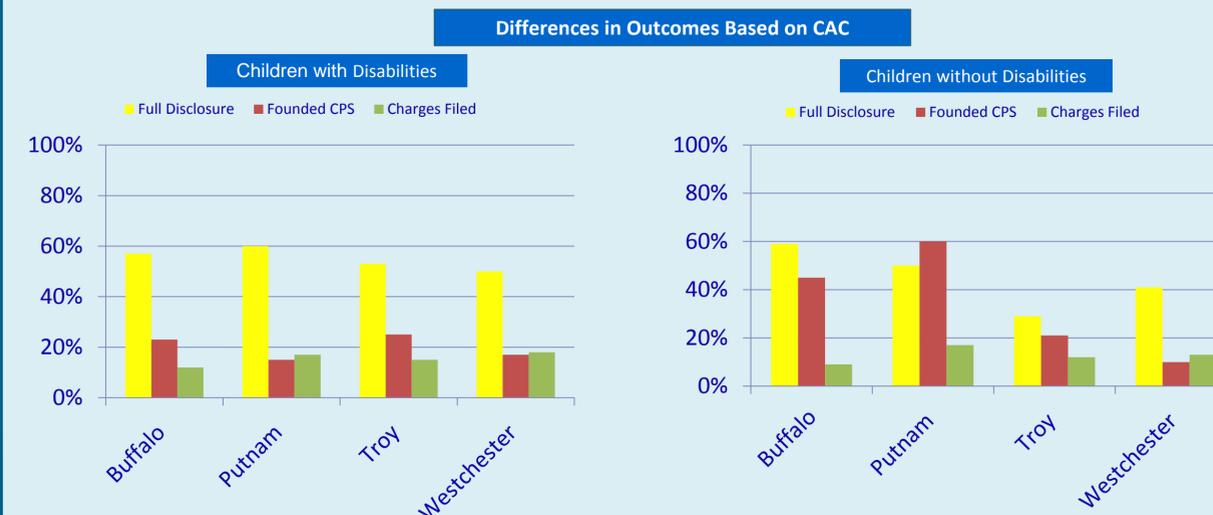
Disclosure:	Yes	52%
	No	27%
	Partial	0.5%
	Missing	20.5%
CPS	Founded	20%
	Unfounded	29%
	Missing	51%
Charges Filed	Yes	15%
	No	35%
	N/A or TBD	51%
	Prosecution	
Yes	.04%	
No	.01%	
Missing	99.95%	

Total Differences in Outcomes

	Disclosure	CPS	Charges Filed
With Disabilities	50%	23%	14%
Without Disabilities	51%	19%	14%

A chi-square test of independence indicates that there was no significant difference in the proportion of children with disabilities as compared to children without disabilities regarding **disclosure rate**, $X^2(1, N = 1169) = 1.579, p = 0.20$. Analysis also indicates no significant difference regarding **founded CPS outcomes**, $X^2(1, N = 698) = 2.987, p = 0.08$, or **charges filed**, $X^2(1, N = 737) = 0.2006, p = 0.65$.

Results



A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between CACs and outcomes for children with disabilities. No significance was found related to **disclosure rate**, $X^2(2, N = 146) = 5.179, p = 0.08$. Regarding **founded CPS outcomes**, the relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(2, N = 85) = 8.974, p = 0.01$. Depending on the CAC (excluding Putnam), there was variability regarding CPS founded cases for children with disabilities. The relationship between **charges filed** and disability was significant, $X^2(1, N = 71) = 7.848, p < 0.01$. There was a difference between Westchester and Buffalo CACs regarding percentages of charges being filed.

Discussion/Next Steps

- Preliminary data analysis suggests that there are not overall differences in rates of disclosure, CPS outcomes, or charges filed based on whether a child has a developmental disability or not. However, there was an interesting trend which supported more CPS founded cases for children with disabilities.
- In comparing CACs, there were significant differences in regards to CPS outcome and charges filed, in regards to the two largest CACs (Westchester/Buffalo). Westchester had a higher rate of charges filed, while Buffalo had a higher rate of CPS founded cases.
- Study limitations include use of a pre-existing data tracking system which could not be customized for this study, variability of information gathered by each CAC and high percentage of missing outcome data. Nonetheless, important information was gathered about an infrequently studied population.
- Data collection is continuing and final results will be shared with CACs to inform intervention.