

THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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

General Tips

- Stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings, whether on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving or waiting for a bus or train.
- 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.
- Have a plan for what you will do if confronted by someone trying to harm you or take your property: show confidence, yell, use a body alarm, etc. Any noise that can be made is a deterrent.
- Practice your responses often so you can recall them in a real situation.
- If you use a wheelchair or other adaptive device, keep money and personal items hidden from view but easily accessible to you personally. Use a fanny pack or pocket attached to the wheelchair arm rather than bags attached to the rear of the chair.
- Develop a network of "safe" people who can assist you in case of emergency.
- There are many laws to protect individuals from abusive situations. Educate yourself about what is a crime and how to report it. Abuse, harassment and intimidation are all crimes and should be reported. Educate yourself about all forms of sexual abuse.

Home Security Tips

- Make sure doors have peepholes or viewing areas at a level that allows you to view visitors.
- Locks on doors and windows should be at levels you can easily reach and operate. Use them while you are at home as well as when you are out.
- Never open the door for a stranger. Ask for proof of who they are and the purpose of the visit. If you are visually impaired and the person at the door says they have official identification, tell the person you will verify by checking the person's identity with their agency.
- Never tell a stranger calling by phone or at your door any personal information, including the nature of your disability.
- Plan an accessible escape route from each room in your residence to use in case of emergency. Practice your escape plans often so that you can recall them in a real situation.
- Have emergency phone numbers and a means of contacting emergency assistance available and accessible to you at all times. Program them into your phone if possible.

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (cont.)

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—especially 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 and 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 installing a cellular phone or other device 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, notify someone for assistance.

Don't Let a Con Artist Rip You Off

Many con artists prey on people's desires to find miracle cures for chronic conditions and fatal diseases. To outsmart these con artists, remember these tips:

- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Don't let greed or desperation overcome common sense.
- Get a second opinion.
- Be wary of high-pressure tactics, need for quick decisions, demands for cash only, or high-yield, low-risk investments.