



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

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Help. Hope. Answers. Today



PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE: JUSTICE FOR ALLIE SPECIAL EDITION

Contributed by Dawn Hayes, Mother and Champion for Allie

I am the parent and guardian of Alexandra Hope. "Allie", her daily moniker, is twenty-one years old and has Down syndrome. Her full scale IQ is 65. She has survived open-heart surgery, leukemia and many other health issues. She participates in Special Olympics and before her predator reached her, enjoyed being social. Allie attends a Transition Center and works part-time at a supply company. Before our trauma began, we could say she was the sunshine in our home. Her heart is pure. Although she is active and we strive to help her reach the highest level of independence, the reality is- she functions cognitively below 99% of her peers.



Allie riding her bike.

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As you can imagine, this combination of a low IQ and extreme naiveté make her an easy target for any predator.

Recently, a predator's dream became our family's nightmare. A person who knew her disability targeted Allie and an on-line contact was made. A single, five-minute conversation that included questions like: "Do your parents check your Facebook?"; "Where do you live now?"; "I've missed you. Have you missed me?" After which, this strategic predator opened the door to a room filled with ill intentions, and Allie's innocence was stolen. During this first encounter, with a person she "thought" she could remember from middle school, Allie said she had to go to sleep because it was 9PM and her parents have rules. The predator begged her to lie down and text him saying, "Your parents won't catch you." She stopped the conversation and went to bed.

Two days later he came after her again, 14 minutes past noon. It was her first day of summer vacation. At this time, he told her to send him nude photos from the waist up and proceeded to quickly send her a barrage of horrific commands for his own pleasure or mockery. Sadly, she was filled with fear (as seen clearly on her beautiful face in every photo) and complied with his demands. After nine minutes, he was attempting to video chat with her, but Allie did not answer. When asked why she did not answer, she told authorities she was scared to see the "bad man" as she put it. She was paralyzed with fear, half naked and had no idea that she had just been assaulted. He attempted to contact her five more times, but she never opened the messages.

More importantly, she never told anyone. People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities. That number comes from data that was run for National Public Radio by the Justice Department from unpublished federal crime data. Discussed, too, is the fact that this type of individual is at risk all moments of their daily lives and are likely to be taken advantage of by someone they know during daytime hours. As in Allie's situation, **most victims never tell anyone.** In our case, my routine checks of all her devices unveiled this crime that shattered our world.

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As reported to me by the County Prosecutor's office, City Attorney and Detective, vulnerable adults are not protected under any state law in Michigan. Essentially, taking advantage of a knowingly impaired adult for immoral, lewd/lascivious conversations and the solicitation of pornographic photos is **legal** today in our state. Our case was sent from the county level to be handled at the city level. Crushed, we could not comprehend the response that "no law was broken because she is technically an adult" as we were told.

Even though this 6' 5" predator admitted during questioning with detectives that he targeted Allie because she had special needs, he might just walk away. After combing daily through our city's legal codes, I discovered an applicable charge. I begged the city attorney to relook at the case and she agreed.

Our predator, who likely distributed Allie's photos, was charged and eventually plead guilty to a misdemeanor - Misuse of a Telecommunication Device. He was sentenced to six days in jail, a year of probation, community service and a mental health evaluation.

The device he used was "stolen" according to the perpetrator and that aspect of the assault remains under investigation. Our case filled the courtroom with standing room only on sentencing day in a "never seen before" organized movement. It was painful for my son and youngest daughter and every aunt, uncle, cousin, friend, student, neighbor, parent of a child with special needs, colleague and grandparent who gulped in horror while they listened to gripping victim impact statements spoken through tears by my husband and I. Stomach turning quotes from the assault left many in awe of the evil they were witnessing.



Allie with siblings, Hannah and Patrick, as Grand Marshall of her school's homecoming parade.

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Allie did not attend court for she lives in fear of seeing the real person behind those perverted, typed commands.

Allie continues to receive weekly therapy for victims of sex crimes and has no social media use. She feels the love and support of many, but is forever changed. That individual stole our bright, innocent, socially interactive daughter's personality for a few moments of his own sick gratification. As her parents, we loathe that this person was able to do something in ten minutes that will haunt us, and especially Allie, for the rest of our lives

Allie is continuously lifted by the kind acts of family and friends. An army of caring people across the country, wear her yellow Protect the Vulnerable t-shirts in solidarity. Her high school asked her to be their Grand Marshall for the homecoming parade, and the School Board honored her for her bravery in sharing her story to help others.

Our family has extended gratitude to all the Troy community servants who took the case personally and worked with integrity and professionalism throughout the horrific process.

Despite the efforts to find justice, we still felt implored to write a law to protect ALL vulnerable adults that might later fall victim to predators like the one who chose Allie. When this happens again, we want to help families ensure their predator will receive an appropriate punishment for what is obviously a **sex crime** and **felony**. What happened to Allie was not just misuse of a phone and simply a misdemeanor. Days after Allie's perpetrator was released from jail, I saw evidence that he was trolling the internet in preparation to violate his next innocent "Allie" and thereby breaking the conditions of his bond.



*Allie receiving an award from Troy Schools.
Picture: Board of Trustees Steve Gottlieb, Troy
School Board President Karl Schmidt,
parents Mark and Dawn Hayes.*

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Based on my continuous research (because I no longer sleep), I knew this type of victimization was going on 24/7. With a passion I have never possessed I began my mission. Although our case had concluded and its outcome would never change, I vowed to get a law written. I approached my local legislators, worked with the City Attorney's office and consulted with the National Arc's legal team. The result felt so worthwhile when Representative Martin Howrylack read House Bill 6347 on September 6, 2018 in Lansing, Michigan; the bill is referred to as "Justice for Allie". The timing for the birth of our bill was, unfortunately, near the end of the term and sadly it died after being stalled in Representative Clint Kesto's Law and Justice committee. Despite my pleading phone calls, emails and offers to come and speak prior to the term ending, no one seemed to care.

Legislation and politics were foreign to me, but I committed once again to see this through to the end, which meant getting this bill reintroduced and signed into law by the governor. I continued to send emails and make phone calls. Not a day went by that I did not take some form of action. Good news came on January 23, 2019, when newly elected Representative Padma Kuppa reintroduced our bill.

Its new number is House Bill 4076, and it has over 30 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle. Representative Kuppa is committed to protecting vulnerable adults in the absence of any current laws that address assault on the Internet. Because of Representative Kuppa's belief in this **obvious need**, she chose this as her first order of business.



CALL TO ACTION



In closing, our family asks all who feel strongly about protecting the vulnerable to please contact your local legislator in **support of HB4076** and urge them to join the movement of over 600 supporters. Tell them why you support it and who you love that it will impact.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this request, which is dear to our hearts. Our combined efforts *can* dictate future cases. Together we must protect ALL vulnerable adults and YOU can help us feel like we achieved some justice for Allie.





A.W.A.R.E. Tips for Caregivers

Contributed by Sarah Curtiss, PhD, MSU, Trinity College Dublin

Open Communication

As few as one in five victims report their sexual assault. Why don't people report? They may be shocked and have a difficult time processing what has happened to them. They may be afraid that the perpetrator will become angry with them and telling someone will make things worse. They may be afraid that they will get in trouble – they may believe that they have done something wrong. They may not be sure who to tell. These are just some reasons why sexual assault goes unreported. One of the things that parents can do is open the door to communication about sexuality early. This provides young people with both verbal and non-verbal language for understanding their bodies, their sexual desires, and sexual safety. For support with opening communication visit Darkness to Light at d2l.org and ASDsexED.org.

Believe the Person

When an assault is discovered or an allegation is made, many survivors are faced with a secondary trauma – they are ignored, denied, or not taken seriously. Worse, they are blamed for what happened. The first step in supporting a loved one is simply believing them.

According to startbelieving.org, an advocacy website from End Violence Against Women International, here are a few scripts of what you can say if you are faced with an allegation or evidence of a sexual assault:

- “I believe you. I’m sorry this happened. I am here for you.”
- “You can tell me as much, or as little as you want. It’s not your fault. I’m glad you told me. I’m so proud of you.”
- Avoid “why” questions. Even with the best of intentions, “why” questions can sound accusatory and make survivors blame themselves.

In Allie’s case, her mom saw evidence of the sexual assault and was confident in taking action, but you may suspect something is not right without a clear allegation or evidence. In that case, trust your instincts and start documenting as much as you can. You can still pursue each of the other steps even without a clear allegation.

Ensure Safety

When ensuring safety, you have to think about immediate, short term, and long term safety. Immediately, you may or may not need to seek medical attention depending on the situation.

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In the case of a physical sexual assault, immediate medical attention is often necessary but can often be traumatizing for individuals. It is appropriate to call the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN) at 1-800-656-4673 for guidance on being a good advocate when seeking medical attention.

Short term safety is highly contextual. You want to disrupt the course of everyday life as little as possible, but also ensure that the perpetrator no longer has access to the survivor. This can be difficult if they go to the same school, are in the same workplace, or live together. Long term safety planning is both a response and a prevention step.

Long term safety planning is a process of intentionally considering the balance of vulnerability and autonomy and creating a formal plan that can be implemented in multiple settings and adapted across time. The Autistic Self Advocacy Network has a Safety Toolkit that provides excellent resources that have been made by autistic self-advocates. It can be found at <https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/toolkits/safety/>

Consider Legal Options

As Allie's story demonstrates, the legal pathway can be quite difficult and it is important to consider all the legal tools available. The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice & Disability is working to address cracks in the criminal justice system. It is important to recognize that some survivors may not want to pursue legal recourse.

Get Support

Both survivors and the caregivers of survivors need prolonged professional and social support to thrive after sexual violence, as well as advice for survivors and loved ones during the process of recovery. Men and boys may need specialized support: 1 in 6 (lin6.org) is a web site that can help connect you to male-specific resources. The Arc's Talk About Sexual Violence project provides disability specific resources.

AAoM's A.W.A.R.E. program has compiled national and Michigan specific resources and training to address the needs of children and adults with special healthcare needs and those who care for them.

Contact navigator@aaomi.org

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MARCH AT A GLANCE

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 <u>Sensory Storytime for Special Needs Adults</u> (Boyne City)	2 <u>U.P. Sled Cats "Try Sled hockey" for FREE!</u> (Escanaba)
3 <u>Camp Expo 2019</u> (Bloomfield Hills)	4	5 <u>Let's Talk About IEPs, Behavior, and Communication Skills</u> (East Lansing)	6 <u>Michigan Council for Exceptional Children 79th Annual Conference</u> (Grand Rapids)	7 <u>Learn About: Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy</u> (Stanton)	8 <u>Navigating Autism Today Conference</u> (Belleville) <u>Behavior Is Communication</u> (Muskegon)	9 <u>Celebration Cinema Sensory Showtimes</u> (Grand Rapids, Portage, Benton Harbor, Mt. Pleasant, Lansing, Muskegon) <u>Jackson Area Early Childhood Conference 2019</u> (Jackson)
10 <u>Fowler Center Adult Weekend Respite Camps</u> (Mayville)	11 <u>Information and Resource Night- Planning Your Next STEPS!</u> (Westland)	12 <u>Long-Term Care / Medicaid Planning</u> (Pinckney)	13 <u>The 5 W's of Assistive Technology</u> (Flint)	14 <u>Intelligent Lives screening</u> (Milford) <u>IEP 101</u> (Lawrence)	15 <u>St. Paddy's Day Dance Party</u> (Washington)	16 <u>Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Michigan</u> (Manistee, Sault Ste. Marie)
17 <u>Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Michigan (SOMI)</u> (Marquette)	18 <u>Sensory Friendly Skate Nights</u> (Muskegon)	19 <u>OUCARES Parent Networking Series</u> (Farmington Hills)	20 <u>DN Parent Network Winter Workshop Series</u> (Traverse City)	21 <u>Michigan Speech - Language-Hearing Conference</u> (East Lansing)	22 <u>Swing into Spring</u> (Oak Park)	23 <u>Michigan Speech - Language-Hearing Conference</u> (East Lansing)
24 <u>Fowler Center Youth Respite Camps</u> (Mayville)	25 <u>2019 West Michigan Ethics Conference & DeVos Medical Ethics Colloquy</u> (Grand Rapids)	26	27 <u>The Arc Community Advocates 12th Annual Inclusion Conference</u> (Kalamazoo)	28 <u>The After I'm Gone Program</u> (Livonia)	29 <u>The Ethics of Effective Self Care for the Helping Professional</u> (Grand Rapids)	30 <u>CBT in Transition</u> (Southfield) 31

** For more information on any of these events, please contact navigator@aaomi.org or 877-463-2266.

2019 NAVIGATING AUTISM TODAY CONFERENCE



Friday, March 8th, 2019 | Wayne County
Community College District - Ted Scott Campus

Register today at

<https://aaomconference.org/register/>



AutismAlliance
of Michigan
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

