



October 4, 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL CONSUMER VOICE FOR QUALITY LONG-TERM CARE  
ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES**

Sexual assault can occur at any age. And the trauma it causes lasts a lifetime.

Brett Kavanaugh's nomination process highlights important parallels with allegations of sexual assault against residents of long-term care facilities – vulnerability of victims, their credibility being questioned, and the serious short and long-term impact of trauma.

Although the recent focus has been on younger people, sexual assault is also devastating for older adults and people with disabilities. Consumer Voice recently released an issue brief and held a webinar on the topic, which had more attendees than any other such webinar. There are clear connections between sexual assault and aging, disability, long-term care, and elder justice.

In addition to those in our recent issue brief<sup>1</sup>, key points on this issue include:

- Older adults, people with disabilities (including dementia) and long-term care residents are **especially vulnerable** to sexual assault. Perpetrators can over-power them, they're not believed, and fear and shame often prevent victims from reporting.
- An estimated **83%** of women with disabilities and **30 – 50%** of men with disabilities are sexually abused in their lifetimes.
- Their sexual assault **frequently goes under-reported**.
- Their **credibility is often challenged** because of the lack of visible injuries, cognitive impairment or low social status.
- Even when sexual abuse in facilities is reported, **allegations are rarely properly investigated or substantiated**.
- Sexual assault has a **devastating impact** on victims throughout their lives. The trauma **lasts for decades, re-emerges in old age, and undermines victims' health, relationships, and ability to function**.
- **Discounting claims of assault revictimizes victims**.
- Disregarding sexual assault claims sends the message that **we, as a society, don't take sexual assault seriously**.

Victims' sexual assault allegations **deserve to be taken seriously**, including with a thorough investigation –regardless of their age or ability.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/issues/sexual-abuse-issue-brief-FINAL.pdf>

*The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.*