

# Education, Training, and Enhanced Services to End Violence Against and Abuse of Women with Disabilities Grant Program

The Education, Training, and Enhanced Services to End Violence Against and Abuse of Women with Disabilities Grant Program (Disability Program) recognizes the need to focus on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking against individuals who are Deaf and/or disabled.

**THESE CHALLENGES SIGNIFICANTLY COMPOUND PROBLEMS FACING** those seeking support to end the violence in their lives. They also complicate the criminal justice system's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, and create difficulties for victim service providers to assist victims.

## 41 Grantees Reporting

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019, 41 unique grantees reported activities funded by the Disability Program.

## 4,957 People Trained

Grantees trained a total of 4,957 people.

## 2,860 People Educated

Grantees educated a total of 2,860 people.

The Disability Program enhances the safety of victims of domestic/sexual violence by supporting projects uniquely designed to address and prevent these crimes against individuals with disabilities.

*People with disabilities may be even more susceptible to domestic/sexual violence, due to key risk factors, such as lower socioeconomic status (e.g., more poverty, less education and income), increased isolation, and increased dependency on others (Hahn et al., 2014).*





*Further research is needed to accurately determine the prevalence of victimization among individuals who are Deaf and/or disabled, in part because these victims may be marginalized or overlooked by society, health care professionals, service providers, and researchers (Ballan et al., 2016; Ballan & Freyer, 2017a; Mastrocinque et al., 2017; Mikton et al., 2014; Plummer & Findley, 2012).*



#### KY • Grantee Perspective

Prior to this funding, individuals with disabilities had limited accessible service options. One of the most wonderful things to report is that we now have interpreters who are being accessed monthly at the Women's Clinic in Auxier. The funding set aside for interpreters made it possible for these women to finally break the barrier and get the care they so desperately needed.

MOUNTAIN COMPREHENSIVE CARE CENTER, INC.,  
KENTUCKY



#### IL • Grantee Perspective

The funding has supported engagement of staff, MOU partners, and self-advocates, which results in focused time addressing sexual violence against people with disabilities and Deaf people. The development of resources by state-level partners for rape crisis centers and disability service staff is possible because OVV funding supports the time for development as well as production, distribution, follow-up training, and technical assistance.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## Grantees engage in the following purpose areas:

- Provide personnel, training, technical assistance, advocacy, intervention, risk reduction, treatment, counseling, advocacy, and other assistance;
- Conduct outreach activities to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate assistance;
- Conduct cross-training for victim service organizations about risk reduction, intervention, and prevention;
- Provide technical assistance to help with modifications to policies, protocols, and procedures to ensure equal access to services;
- Provide training and technical assistance on the requirements of shelters and victim services organizations under federal anti-discrimination laws;
- Modify facilities, purchase equipment, and fund personnel so that shelters and victim service organizations can accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities;
- Provide advocacy and intervention services for individuals with disabilities; and
- Develop model programs providing advocacy and intervention services within organizations.

## General Grant Information

Information for this report was submitted by **41** individual grantees for the July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019 progress reporting period.

- **One** grantee reported that their grant specifically addressed tribal populations.

Grantees most frequently addressed the following purpose areas:

- Provide personnel, training, technical assistance, advocacy, intervention, risk reduction, treatment, counseling, advocacy, and other assistance;
- Develop model programs providing advocacy and intervention services; and
- Conduct cross-training for victim service organizations about risk reduction, intervention, and prevention.

## Staff

Grant-funded staff provide training, consultation, and information to service providers about responding to violence against women with disabilities. **Being able to hire staff is critical to the overall function and success of programs.**

- **41** (100%) grantees used funds for staffing needs.
- Grantees funded an average of **41** full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during each 6-month period.
- Grantees most often used these staffing funds to support program coordinators, administrators, disability advocates, and victim advocates.

**Table 1** | Staff supported with Disability grant funds, July 2017–June 2019:  
**Selected groups**

Staff funded	6-month average	
<b>Total FTE staff funded</b>	<b>41</b>	
Program coordinators	<b>23</b>	<b>56%</b>
Administrators	<b>4</b>	<b>10%</b>
Disability advocates	<b>4</b>	<b>10%</b>
Victim advocates	<b>4</b>	<b>10%</b>
Deaf advocates	<b>2</b>	<b>5%</b>
Support staff	<b>2</b>	<b>5%</b>

NOTE: Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

**OK • Grantee Perspective**



The Disability Program funding has allowed Domestic Violence Intervention Services (DVIS) to hire a Deaf project coordinator. This staffing has created more awareness among DVIS staff who do not normally encounter Deaf individuals. Staff has started to pick up some basic sign language and overall, they have reported feeling more comfortable about interacting with Deaf clients and using interpreters since the project coordinator was hired. Having access to interpretation funds has removed a communication barrier which allows us to build on the existing collaborations and create more meaningful relationships. Funding has also allowed collaboration members to attend various training opportunities and actually dedicate time to the Deaf community to improve sexual and domestic violence services for Deaf survivors.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTERVENTION SERVICES, OKLAHOMA**

*Cross-training between disability services and victim services organizations allows providers to serve Deaf and/or disabled persons most effectively. Because victims with disabilities come from various cultural, racial, socioeconomic, geographic, and ethnic populations, and have different disabilities, it is critical that victim services, law enforcement agencies, and other first responders tailor their programs to appropriately respond to the full spectrum of assistance victims need (Ballan et al., 2014; Ballan & Freyer, 2017b; Khemka & Hickson, 2017; Lund et al., 2017; Nelson & Lund, 2017).*



**Training**

Grantees train professionals in the service-delivery system to respond more effectively to victims with disabilities by providing information on the unique needs of these individuals and the special challenges they face when they become victims of violence. **This training improves the professional response to victims and increases offender accountability.**

- **22** (54%) grantees used funds for training.
- Grantees convened a total of **215** training events.

**MA • Grantee Perspective**



Critical first steps that this funding has made possible to date include collecting valuable data from stakeholders, as well as collecting useful data regarding existing agency policies and procedures and the physical characteristics of our service locations. Also as a result of this grant funding, we were able to complete a second set of indicators, compiling further data we have since used to inform our Needs Assessment Plan. Perhaps the most valuable of all is the opportunity the grant has afforded us to offer individual interviews and focus group participation to the survivors themselves. The information gathered through our research would not have been possible without this funding, and would have left many problem areas undiscovered.

**THE ARC OF BRISTOL COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS**

In the two years covered by this report, Disability Program grantees trained:

**4,957**  
**PROFESSIONALS**

across **the service delivery system:**

**DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS**

**DUAL SEXUAL ASSAULT/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS**



## OH • Grantee Perspective

With the support of the Disability Program Funding, we have been able to provide direct advocacy services and improve outreach in the D/deaf community. Through the work of the deaf advocate, victims have received services such as advocacy in court proceedings, accompaniment to legal appointments, weekly support groups, and employment assistance. These services were delivered to victims with the assurance of language accessibility. The project was able to provide education to organizations in the community to improve accessibility for victims with disabilities. Keys 4 Deaf was able to have a presence at major events in the community to increase awareness of services available. Resource materials were made available at these events to increase accessibility to services as needed. The project was able to educate first responders on Deaf culture and equip the Cleveland Division of Police with tools for effective communication. Due to the education of interpreters and medical personnel, victims are able to receive a culturally informed response when seeking services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & CHILD  
ADVOCACY CENTER, OHIO



*A recent review of the literature on crisis response services for people with mental illness and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) reveals that populations with mental illness have received far more research attention than those with I/DD. While several important studies report on promising practices in the field, more research is needed that incorporates all stakeholders, including people with disabilities, to help practitioners improve their evidence-based responses to victims with disabilities (Watson, Compton, & Pope, 2019).*

## Community Education

Grant-funded staff provide general information to the community to increase awareness of domestic/sexual violence. **Community education can be used as a tool to connect people who have a common goal of building safe, supportive, and accountable communities.**<sup>i</sup>

- **10** (24%) grantees used funds for community education.
- Grantees hosted a total of **96** education events.
- Grantees provided education to a total of **2,860** people.

**Table 2** | People educated with Disability grant funds, July 2017–June 2019:  
**Selected groups**

People educated	2-year total	
<b>Total people educated</b>	<b>2,860</b>	
Deaf individuals	<b>1,364</b>	<b>48%</b>
Parents/guardians of individuals with disabilities	<b>769</b>	<b>27%</b>
People with disabilities	<b>358</b>	<b>13%</b>
Community groups	<b>204</b>	<b>7%</b>

**NOTE:** Data presented for the most frequently reported categories only (≥5%).

## Technical Assistance

In addition to training, grantees provide technical assistance to service providers to enable them to improve services to individuals with disabilities who are victims of domestic/sexual violence. Technical assistance may be provided through site visits, consultations, information responses, referrals, or other collaboration, and may include guidance on collaboration and cross-training for responding to victims with disabilities; responding to violence against women with mental illness; accessible communication (ASL interpreters/communication devices); and managing disclosure, confidentiality, and safety.

- **10** (24%) grantees used funds for technical assistance.
- Grantees provided a total of **646** technical assistance activities.

<sup>i</sup> Community education involves providing general information that will increase public awareness of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Community education is not the same as training. Training involves providing information on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking that enables a professional to improve their response to victims as it relates to their role in the system.

## Victim Services

Grantees provide an array of services to victims. All victims receive safety planning, referrals, and information as needed. **These comprehensive support services address a wide variety of needs to help victims become and remain safe from violence.**

- **7** (17%) grantees used funds for victim services.
- Grantees provided services to an average of **28** victims during each 6-month period.
- **100%** of victims who sought services received them during each 6-month period.

### During each 6-month period, on average, grantees provided:

- Support group/counseling services to **14** victims;
- Case management to **10** victims;
- Victim advocacy services to **10** victims;
- Peer support services to **9** victims;
- Crisis intervention to **8** victims;
- Civil legal advocacy services to **7** victims; and
- Personal planning services to **7** victims.

### Other services:

- Grantees received a total of **34** hotline calls; and
  - **79%** of these calls came from victims.

## Victims Seeking Services

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victims of **domestic/dating violence** (79%).

*People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than that of people without disabilities, according to an analysis of Justice Department data (Shapiro, 2018).*



### WA • Grantee Perspective

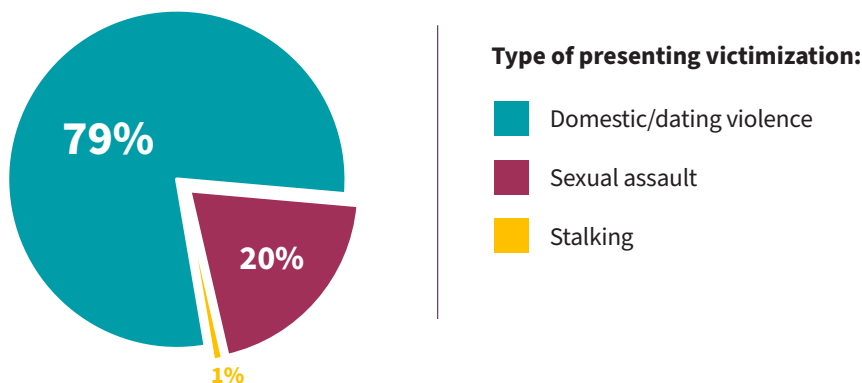


The tight-knit collaboration with the partners has been instrumental in helping develop common language and common goals, and identifying and addressing common barriers to meet the needs of resident survivors in long-term care settings. Having space and time to regularly meet with partners to build strategies; discuss policies, procedures and practices; and develop deliverables has expanded our internal capacity, awareness, and expertise extensively. We could not have done this without funding. We have an increased awareness of how to reach, respond to, and support survivors in a collaborative and intersectional way, where we did not before. Disability program funds were also essential in developing in-depth understanding of trauma, abuse disclosure, accommodation provision, and access. It also gave our collaboration tools to better identify and respond to the hurdles that are specific to survivors in long-term care, many of whom face too great a threat of retaliation to disclose. The Long-Term Care Ombudsperson has seen a general increase in reporting of sexual abuse, as has the Developmental Disability Ombudsperson. All organizations have changed the way they respond to abuse.

DISABILITY RIGHTS WASHINGTON

**Figure 1** | Provision of victim services by Disability Program grantees, by type of presenting victimization

Victims served and partially served by type of victimization (6-month average)





*Interpreters who are specially trained in a trauma-informed approach can help ensure that Deaf, hard of hearing, and low English proficiency victims may communicate with service providers in a clear and transparent way (Bancroft et al., 2017).*



### MA • Grantee Perspective

Every individual who has worked most closely with the collaborative has shared significant changes in worldview because of this work. Participants shared that they learned to recognize ableism and have a deeper understanding of what inclusion and access means. Participants shared about recognizing the broad range of needs of survivors with disabilities and the importance of every role. Participants have shifted from coming together as separate agencies to truly seeing themselves as a collaborative. They also shared that their new understanding is something they bring into their personal lives, as well as professional.

This depth of change on both an individual and systems level would not be possible without the grant funding we've received since 2011 under the OWW Disability Program. The program's cooperative model, including its focus on process as a significant part of product development, has been critical to our successes. Additionally, we also recognize that being funded for a lengthy period of time has contributed to our ability to make these significant changes. It would be unlikely to be able to make some of these more sustainable changes in only one grant period.

**BOSTON AREA RAPE CRISIS CENTER,  
MASSACHUSETTS**



*College students and young adults with disabilities are nearly twice as likely to have experienced psychological, sexual, stalking, or physical abuse as those without disabilities (Brown et al., 2017; Findley et al., 2016; Haydon et al., 2011; Reynolds & Scherer, 2018; Scherer et al., 2016). In particular, a recent study using data from the National College Health Assessment concluded that female students with disabilities were over 100% more likely to experience completed assaults, attempted assaults, and relationship assaults compared to female students without disabilities (Campe, 2019).*

**Table 3** | Victims seeking services with Disability grant funds, July 2017–June 2019

Victims seeking services	6-month average	
<b>Total victims seeking services</b>	<b>28</b>	
Victims served	27	96%
Victims partially served	1	4%
Victims not served	0	0%

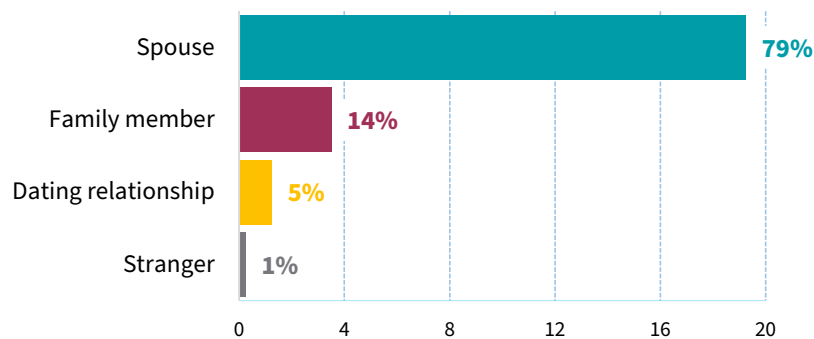
**NOTE:** "Partially served" represents victims who received some but not all of the service(s) they requested, provided those services were funded under the Disability Program grant. "Not served" represents victims who sought services and did not receive the service(s) they were seeking, provided those services were funded under the Disability Program grant.

## Victims' Relationships to Offenders

Grantees serve victims of domestic/sexual violence. Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2019:

- The majority of victims served or partially served were victimized by a **spouse or intimate partner** (65%).
- The remaining victims were most commonly victimized by a **family or household member** (16%), or in the context of a **dating relationship** (8%).

**Figure 2** | Type of victimization by relationship to offender: **Domestic violence** (6-month average)



**NOTE:** Numbers for relationship to offender were too small to compute for sexual assault and stalking victimizations.

## Reasons Victims Were Partially Served

During each reporting period, grantees noted the following barriers as reasons why victims were not served or were only partially served:

- Program unable to provide service due to limited resources; and
- Transportation.

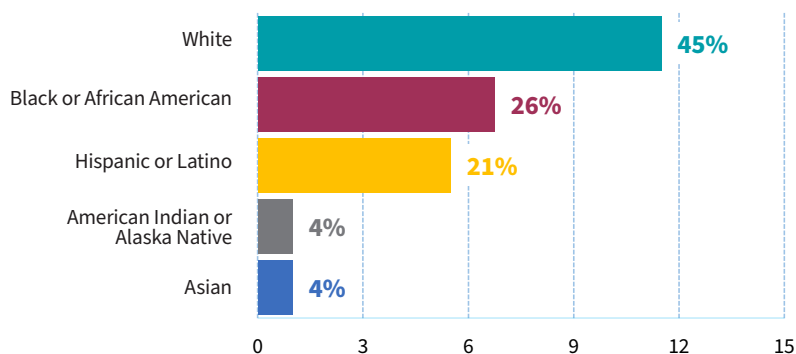
## Demographics of Victims Served and Partially Served

Grantees served or partially served an average of **28** victims during each 6-month period. The victims most frequently served or partially served were **white** (45%), **female** (92%), and between the ages of **25 and 59** (77%).

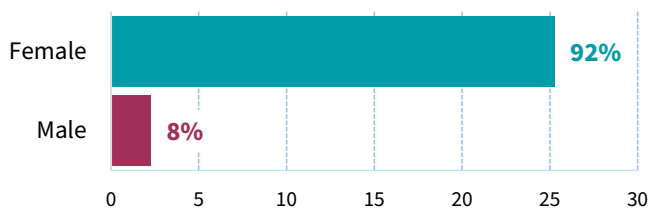


*Emerging research suggests that men with disabilities experience abuse at similar rates to women with disabilities, and more often than non-disabled men, pointing toward the need for targeted intervention strategies (Mitra et al., 2016; Platt et al., 2017). Further, individuals with multiple disability types experience sexual assault rates more than 1.5 times those experienced by people with one disability (Harrell, 2017).*

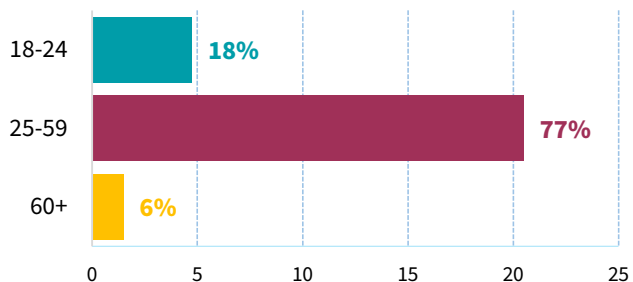
**Figure 3** | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Race/ethnicity** (6-month average)



**Figure 4** | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Gender** (6-month average)



**Figure 5** | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Age** (6-month average)



### NY • Grantee Perspective

This grant made it possible for three partner agencies to join together in pursuit of the mutual goal of improving our collective capacity to serve Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Representatives of all partner agencies have significantly improved their individual cultural competency, and the agencies as a whole have gained a better understanding of the unique issues facing Deaf survivors. We have been able to incorporate these learnings into tangible changes that will positively impact services for Deaf survivors. We ensured agency policies and procedures are sensitive to the needs of Deaf survivors and we have implemented a mandatory training program for all staff and volunteers. We were able to host a Trauma Informed Qualified Interpreters training to ensure a pool of local interpreters were trained on trauma-informed interpreting for survivors. Access to services has improved as both RESTORE and Willow have experienced a continuous increase in the number of Deaf survivors seeking services. Most importantly, the accomplishments made possible through OVV funding will continue to make an impact beyond this grant cycle as these changes have been incorporated into agency services. The Deaf Gain Collaborative is looking forward to building upon the positive foundation we have made and making more positive changes when we address the remaining three key findings of the needs assessment that were not included in the strategic plan.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR BATTERED WOMEN, NEW YORK**



### CA • Grantee Perspective

Although the 15 years of collaborating has brought a lot of change and infusion of understanding of the intersection of disability and abuse, there continues to be a need to emphasize that responding to and supporting victims with disabilities is not an added service.

Part of having comprehensive services to all victims of abuse means being prepared to provide appropriate supports to victims with disabilities. We believe that this is happening, but sometimes agencies feel that they need to have a “specialized” advocate to respond.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES MAYOR'S OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY, CALIFORNIA

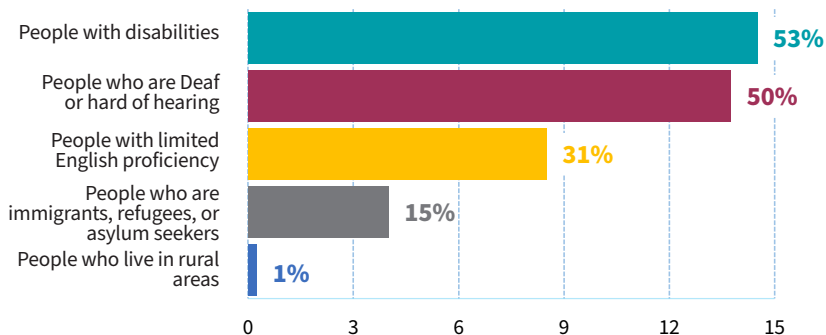


### WI • Grantee Perspective

Language barriers, access to interpreters, and insufficient numbers of responders who are experienced in identifying individualized learning styles, modes of communication, and other individualized needs are all barriers to meaningful services and supports. Of particular concern is the lack of expertise and capacity to provide services to those survivors who are non-verbal. A lack of adequate familiarity with and availability of technology such as augmentative systems and access to varied equipment (for example the TTY is available for Deaf survivors) all demonstrate obstacles in the area of communication.

DISABILITY RIGHTS WISCONSIN

**Figure 6** | Demographics of victims served and partially served: **Other** (6-month average)



## Remaining Areas of Need

Grantees noted that **service providers and victim advocates need specialized training and technical assistance to better serve victims with disabilities**, including the ability to:

- Understand and accommodate the communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing victims;
- Communicate with individuals with cognitive disabilities;
- Provide better accessibility for victims with physical disabilities;
- Work with victims with severe mental illness and/or substance abuse; and
- Collaborate with adult guardians in order to provide care to victims.

Without the proper tools to serve victims with disabilities, grantees felt that victims with disabilities **would hesitate to report** abuse and therefore put themselves in further danger.

Grantees also pointed to the need for more **community education and outreach to victims with disabilities, caretakers, and community members**, including:

- Creating awareness of available DV/SA services for people with disabilities;
- Educating the community about violence against people with disabilities;
- Combating social stigmas and discrimination against people with disabilities, which prevent victims from getting the help they need; and
- Educating people with intellectual disabilities about sex, consent, and healthy relationships.

Grantees also noted how barriers to accessing services abound for victims with disabilities. The **lack of accessible transportation, physically inaccessible facilities, or the lack of appropriate assistive technology** all hinder a victim's ability to access much needed services.



Noting that disability rights organizations and domestic/sexual violence service providers often work in silos, grantees called for **more collaboration between service providers** to serve the unique needs of victims with disabilities, as well as **proper training to service providers and the criminal justice system on:**

- The use of appropriate language and terminology when working with victims with disabilities;
- Accommodating the unique needs of clients with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities; and
- Trauma-informed practices for working with victims with disabilities.

Grantees also emphasized the importance of **meeting the basic needs of victims with disabilities**, including:

- Safe and accessible shelter and long-term housing;
- Transportation; and
- Mental health services.



#### FL • Grantee Perspective

We need better communication across interconnecting systems, such as healthcare, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system. While education and community awareness of resources is of critical importance in addressing obstacles faced by people with disabilities, it is imperative that the resources and systems in place to serve people with disabilities are functioning collaboratively and have a common language and understanding of how to provide trauma-informed and accessible services.

**DISABILITY INDEPENDENCE GROUP, INC., FLORIDA**

