

INTEGRATING DISABILITY JUSTICE INTO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE COUNSELING AND ADVOCACY



Society for
Maternal•Fetal
Medicine



03

Better Care

Learning Objective: Identify ableism, disability stigma, and other biases in the provision of care for high-risk pregnancies.

Answer:

What inequities exist in reproductive healthcare?

What is eugenics?

What should providers do?

What Are The Inequities?

Despite having the best intentions, providers may inadvertently stigmatize disability. This stigma and other biases can impact subsequent decision-making during pregnancies and exacerbate inequities.



These inequities...



1. Can occur before patients seek care.



2. Happen during the care experience.



3. Can lead to medical distrust.



4. Are part of history of eugenics.

Inequities That Exist Before Disabled Patients Seek Care

Disabled people have **inequitable access to transportation, education, housing, and employment**, which may in turn affect their ability to adequately achieve the health care they want and need.

31% of people with disabilities report **fair or poor health** and are more likely to experience **chronic conditions** like cardiac disease, diabetes, higher weight, and asthma.

People with disabilities are more likely to encounter **sexual violence** in their lives.

People with disabilities are less likely to receive **sex education** in schools.

Health Disparities Are...



Heavily linked to the Social Determinants of Health, including social and economic disadvantages



Often passed from one generation to the next



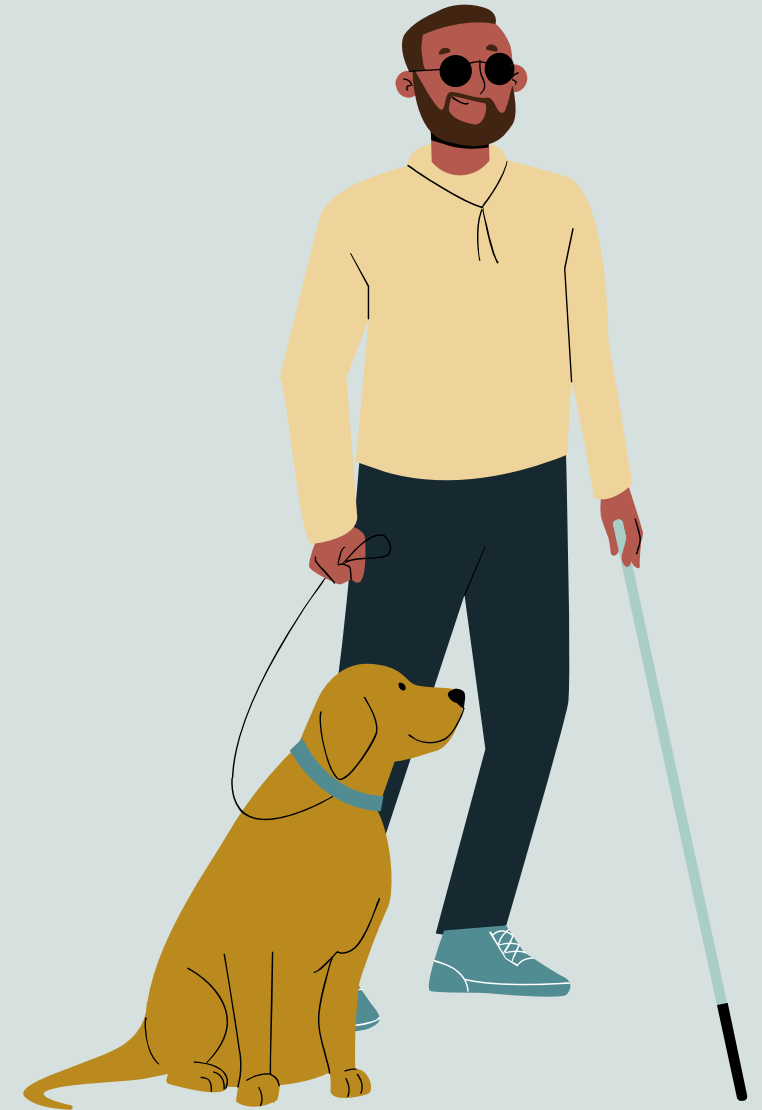
Perpetuated by discrimination, lack of access, and income inequality

Inequities Often Occur During The Healthcare Experience

A FEW WAYS THIS MAY SHOW UP

- Lack of healthcare practitioner training on caring for people with disabilities
- Disability stigma
- Substandard quality of care
- Lack of representation of people with disabilities in healthcare professions
- Inaccessible healthcare facilities
- Nonexistent adaptive equipment and skilled language interpreters

Ableism is entrenched in the healthcare system, from how we exclude people with disabilities to how we health care providers de-prioritize their voices and needs during the healthcare encounter.

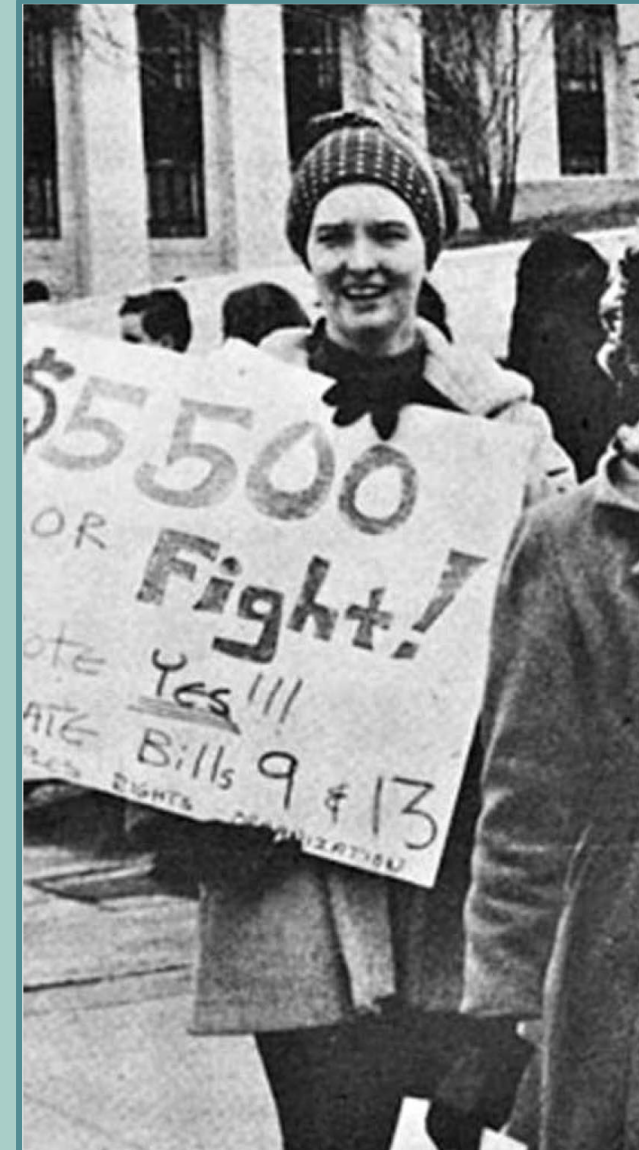


**SO JUST HOP UP ON
THE TABLE WHENEVER
YOU'RE READY**



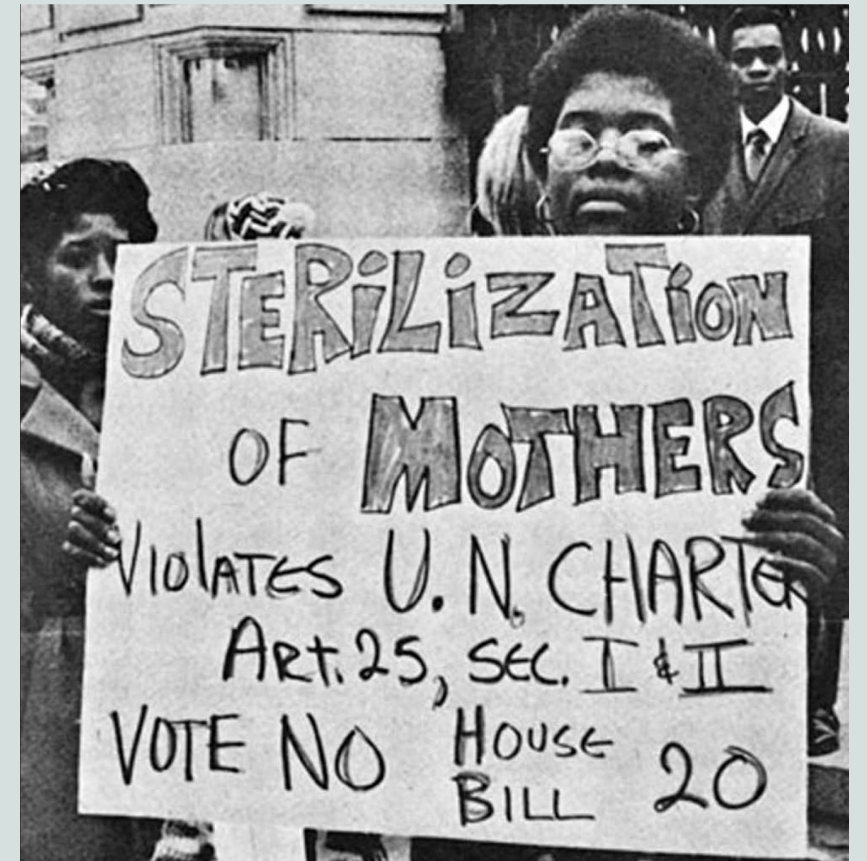
What is Eugenics?

- Eugenics is an ableist and white supremacist concept seeking to control reproduction and bodily autonomy on the basis of who is perceived as “genetically superior”.
- The Eugenics movement of the early 20th century targeted people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people, leading to forced sterilization and institutionalization.



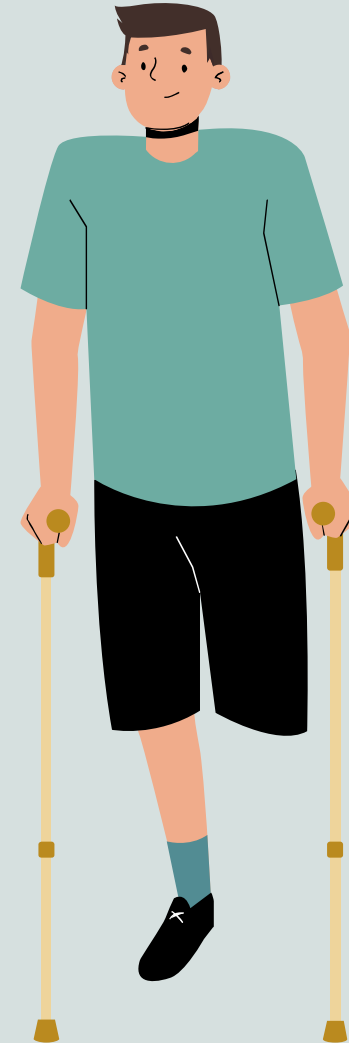
Eugenics Continues Today...

- ❖ 31 states with laws allowing forced sterilization
- ❖ Disabled people of color- particularly those with a cognitive disability are disproportionately sterilized
- ❖ Women with a disability are more likely to be sterilized



Medical Mistrust is...

- ❖ Justified.
- ❖ Rooted in survival.
- ❖ Something that cannot easily be solved by individual provider impact.
- ❖ Defined as a lack of trust in or suspicion of medical organizations and providers.



MEDICAL MISTRUST IS...

The sum total and reaction to eugenics and ableism across the lifecourse for people with disabilities.

**PROVIDERS HAVE A ROLE TO
PLAY IN COMBATING
ABLEISM IN HEALTHCARE...**



Providers Have A Role To Play In Combating Ableism In Healthcare:

LEAD WITH DISABILITY HUMILITY

Take time to learn about experiences, cultures, histories, and politics of disability, recognizing that an able-bodied person's understanding of disability will always be partial.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY ABOUT DISABILITY

Poor patient-clinician communication can further entrench medical mistrust. Disentangling ableism from the language you use and interrogating the role of ableism in clinician-decision-making can support building trust.

Providers Have A Role To Play In Combating Ableism In Healthcare:

RECOGNIZE THE AUTHORITY OF DISABLED PEOPLE AS EXPERTS ABOUT THEIR OWN LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

People with disabilities are frequently not taken seriously in the healthcare setting. Elevate their voices and their epistemic authority over their own bodies