

How Can We Prevent This?

1. Change the conversation

Center the victim. Condemn the murderer. Refuse to “understand,” excuse, justify, minimize, or normalize a parent killing their child. Refuse to accept this.

2. Prosecute

Call for these crimes to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, similarly to other filicides. Demand that people with disabilities have equal protection under the law. Consider lobbying your state legislature to include disability in your state’s hate crimes statute, or to adopt one if your state does not have one.

3. End ableism

Challenge ableism (anti-disability bias and prejudice) everywhere you see it. Challenge the idea that it is better to be dead than disabled, that disabled people are a drain on society, that disability means suffering, and that disabled lives are not worth living. Promote inclusion, community integration, and acceptance.

4. Self-report

If you think you are going to harm your child or adult relative, turn yourself in. Call 911 or child protective services and say “I am thinking about killing my child.”

5. Community reporting

If someone you know is talking about killing their child, turn them in. Often in the wake of a filicide people come forward to say that days or months before the murder, the perpetrator made a comment to them suggesting that they were contemplating homicide: “I’m despairing about my child’s condition - I think this is the end for him,” or “kids like mine should be put down,” or even “I am thinking about killing my child.” In addition, report any indications you might see of child abuse or child neglect. Abuse and neglect of children and adults with disabilities is very common and extremely under-reported, and many filicides are preventable escalations.¹³

¹³ Patricia M. Sullivan & John F. Knutson, “Maltreatment and Disabilities: A Population-Based Epidemiological Study,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 24, (2000); Irit Hershkowitz et al., “Victimization of Children with Disabilities,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 77, (2007); Jeannette E. Manders, Zolinda Stoneman, “Children with disabilities in the child protective services system: an analog study of investigation and case management,” *Child Abuse and Neglect*, (2009).