

Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation: Preventing, Recognizing, and Reporting

There is no acceptable excuse for abuse and neglect of a patient or client, but recognizing and preventing the problem of caregiver/family stress may help prevent abuse.

Abuse and neglect will not occur if we remember everyone has the right to be treated with respect.

Definitions

Psychological abuse: Causing emotional or psychological pain. Includes isolation, verbal abuse, threats, and humiliation.

Neglect: Failing to provide something necessary for health and safety, such as personal care, food, shelter, or medicine.

Physical abuse: Using physical force to cause physical pain or injury.

Rights violations: Confining someone against his will, or strictly controlling the elder's behavior. Includes improper use of restraints and medications to control difficult behaviors.

Financial abuse: Stealing or mismanaging the money, property, or belongings of an individual. Also called *EXPLOITATION*.

Sexual abuse: Forcing sexual contact without the patient's consent, including touching or sexual talk.

Other Ways Patients Are Abused:

- Overmedicating
- Denying aids such as walkers, eyeglasses, or dentures
- Dirty living conditions
- Inadequate heating or air conditioning

Signs of Abuse and Neglect

Be concerned if you see a patient or client showing these new behaviors or signs:

Personality and behavior changes:

1. Becoming withdrawn, unusually quiet, depressed, or shy.
2. Becoming anxious, worried, easily upset.
3. Refusing care from caregivers.
4. Not wanting to be around people, not wanting to see visitors.

Physical signs:

1. Bruises or burns
2. In a woman, vaginal bleeding or bruising of the genitals or thighs
3. Fractures
4. Unreasonable or inconsistent explanations for injuries
5. Frequent emergency room visits

Signs of possible neglect:

1. Weight loss, malnutrition, or dehydration
2. Insufficient clothing, shoes, or basic hygiene items
3. Medications not filled or taken.
4. Doctor visits not scheduled or kept
5. Unclean appearance or smell
6. Skin ulcers or sores
7. Declining health

While most of these things are controlled in an institution, it is possible for any of them to occur anywhere. Abusive or neglectful caregivers can be professionals as well as family members. It is important for everyone to be alert to the signs.

REPORTING ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION

ANY AIDE WHO SUSPECTS ABUSE OF A PATIENT BY EITHER A FAMILY MEMBER OR ANOTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVER SHOULD FIRST REPORT IT TO HIS OR HER SUPERVISOR IMMEDIATELY.

Any employee accused of abuse, neglect, or exploitation will be suspended immediately while the agency performs an investigation. Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of any kind is grounds for immediate termination and reportable to the home health aide registry.

The agency is responsible for reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation to the appropriate state agencies within 24 hours of knowledge. The agency is also responsible for notifying the patient's appropriate emergency contact/POA.