**Home Care Aide**

**Annual Training**



***Recognizing and Reporting***

***Abuse and Neglect***



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## A. Introduction

Abuse and neglect are serious issues in our communities and long term care facilities. People are most at risk for abuse and neglect when they are unable to care for themselves. The two groups most at risk for abuse and neglect include children and the elderly.

## A.1 What is Abuse?

**Abuse** is an action by an individual that causes physical or emotional harm to the victim. Listed below are the most common forms of abuse we will discuss today:



* Physical and Sexual Abuse
* Emotional Abuse
* Financial Abuse
* Healthcare Abuse/Fraud

## A.2 What is Neglect?

**Neglect** occurs when a caregiver, who is responsible to provide for someone who is unable to care for themselves, fails to provide adequate care.

Neglect may include the failure to provide sufficient supervision, nourishment, or medical care, or the failure to fulfill other needs for which the senior cannot provide for themselves.

## A.3 When and Where Does Abuse and Neglect Happen?

Abuse and neglect occur throughout many communities around the U.S. Everyday there are elders being abused in their own homes. Unfortunately, the abuser usually is a family member or close friend with psychological issues, stress, or poor impulse control with no patience.

Abuse and neglect can also occur in many long term care facilities, or nursing homes. The most common type of mistreatment in these institutions is neglect. Often these situations occur because the staff is overworked, stressed, or untrained.

It is important to learn about abuse and neglect so you can know the signs, watch your clients for signs of it, know how to report if you suspect it, and protect yourself from being charged with abuse or neglect of a client.

# B. Understanding Elder Abuse

## B.1 What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is defined as harm done to a person over the age of 65 by someone who is in a positon of being trusted by the victim. We can only estimate the actual number of elderly who are abused every year, which is about 2.5 million cases each year. Studies have shown for every one case that is reported 13 cases of abuse go unreported. Below is a continued list of elder abuse facts:

* 5-10% of seniors are abused, the majority of these being female, although abuse of male seniors are becoming just as common.
* Elder abuse has increased over 100%since 1986.
* Adult children are the abusers in 35% of cases reported.
* Spouses are the abusers in 13% of reported cases.
* The average age of abused seniors is 78 years old.

## B.2 Why do Cases go Unreported?

There are many reasons why elder abuse cases go unreported. The most common reason being they are afraid the abuser will find out and become angry, causing more harm. Other reasons include:

* They are afraid the authorities will take their family members away.
* They are ashamed that their adult child or caregiver is abusing them and they do not want anyone else to find out.
* They are afraid they might be taken away from their homes and possibly put into a nursing home.
* They may not know what is occurring is a crime or that there are people there to help them.
* They may have lived with the problem for so long that they do not feel it is a big deal.

## B.3 What are Signs of Elder Abuse?

Signs of physical abuse can present itself in different ways. Listed below are “red flags” that should not be taken lightly or passed over:

* The abuser will not let the client speak to anyone without them present in fear the client will tell someone what is happening.
* Unexplained bruises or injuries.
* The client becomes withdrawn, refusing to eat or take care of themselves.
* The client is being wrongfully punished for being incontinent or having incontinent episodes.
* You notice the family or other caregivers abusing drugs or alcohol.
* You hear different stories about how the client got a bruise or injury.
* A family member refuses to allow you to complete the clients care.

## B.4 Who is at Risk for Elder Abuse?

Abuse can happen to anyone depending on their situation; however, there are certain factors that increase a senior’s risk.

* Physical or mental impairments such as immobility and dementia
* Declining health conditions
* Isolation from family, friend, or community
* High dependency on others for care needs

There are also perpetrator risk factors including:

* Caregiver stress
* Caregivers not trained on how to properly care for someone else
* Emotional issues or stress at home
* Drug and/or alcohol abuse



**C. Understanding Physical Abuse**

## C.1 What is Physical Abuse?

Physical abuse is the use of physical force that may cause injury, pain, or impairment to the victim. Examples of physical abuse include the following:

* striking, hitting, slapping or beating
* pushing or shoving
* shaking and kicking
* pinching
* burning
* using physical restraints to keep them from getting up or walking
* using chemical restraints to make someone “quiet” or “sleepy”
* withholding food or drinks from them or forcing them to intake food or water
* physical punishment
* inappropriate sexual contact



## C.2 What are Common Signs of Physical Abuse?

The most common signs of physical abuse are:

* Unexplained bruises, especially in the shape of an object or a hand/fingers.
* Burns, including cigarette burns.
* Frequent trips to the hospital or emergency room for unexplained injuries.
* Cuts or scrapes.
* Black eyes and/ or broken eye glasses.
* Signs of sexual abuse that include bruising around the breast or genitals, unexplained venereal diseases and/or vaginal bleeding.
* Signs of restraints which include bruising or rope marks around the wrists or ankles.
* Unexplained broken bones.

**C.3 How to be Aware of Physical Abuse and What You Can Do About It**

As a Home Care Aide it is important to watch your clients for sigs of physical abuse. Be sure to discuss any suspicions you have with your supervisor. It’s also important to know how comfortable your clients are with physical contact. Some may welcome a hug and others may consider it an invasion of their personal space. Be aware and respectful of your client’s boundaries.

It’s important to work efficiently, but be careful not to rush through activities. When you or your client feel rushed or are hurried through an activity it is easy for someone to get hurt. For example, many seniors have a difficult time with chewing and swallowing food so rushing through a meal might cause them to choke. Transferring a heavy client without assistance may end up with you hurting your back and injuring the client. While you never mean to harm your clients, rushing though your work may be seen by others as physical abuse.

Reporting a situation when you’re not sure if there is in fact physical abuse occurring may seem wrong, but it is not. If it is abuse, you might end up saving that client’s life or freeing them from pain. This will also allow the abuser the chance to get the help the need. If it is not abuse one will be permanently hurt by the report.

**D. Understanding Emotional Abuse**

## D.1 What is Emotional Abuse?

Emotional abuse is when someone causes anguish, pain or distress to another person by what they say or what they do. Emotional abuse would include examples of the following:

* insults
* threats
* intimidation
* humiliation
* harassment
* treating an elderly person like and infant
* keeping someone away from family, friends, or their community
* giving someone the silent treatment

**D.2 What are Common Signs of Emotional Abuse?**

Your client might display the following sins of emotional abuse listed below. Keep an eye out and take note if you client:

* seems to be afraid of a certain caregiver or family member
* is being yelled at or being made fun of by family members or caregivers
* is suddenly agitated or confused
* talks about being worthless or are very depressed
* has trouble sleeping or never seem to get enough sleep
* has a sudden change in appetite
* has a big change in their weight, either up or down.
* seems very quite or just stop talking suddenly

**D.3 What You Can do About Emotional Abuse and Your Clients**

It’s important to watch your clients for signs of emotional abuse. Do not be afraid to discuss a situation that you think might be emotional abuse with your supervisor, even if it involves a co-worker. Avoid making jokes about your clients. It may seem like a harmless way to lighten the stress from your day, but it could be overheard by a family member and interpreted as emotional abuse. It is also important to report rude, disrespectful behavior towards your clients, even if it comes from a family member. It is important to treat all of your clients with kindness and respect. Think of how you’d want your loved ones treated if they were in a similar position.

**E. Understanding Financial Abuse**

## E.1 What is Financial Abuse?

Financial abuse includes theft or misuse of someone’s money by a trusted individual. This would include the following:

1. stealing cash, income, or household goods for profit
2. committing fraud by misusing credit cards or forging checks that belong to someone else, unauthorized
3. receiving money by lying about why it’s needed
4. cashing someone else’s checks without their permission
5. using someone else’s ATM card without permission
6. forcing someone to change their will or transfer property

**E.2 Signs of Financial Abuse**

There are common signs that someone is being financially abused. It’s important to watch your client who:

* can’t pay their bills for housing, food, basic clothing or medications even though they seem like they have enough finances to do so.
* get credit cars bills for stores they do not shop at or have never been to.
* have subscriptions to services or goods they do not use.
* seem anxious about, or do not know where there money is going.
* talk about having to give money to others.
* have a family members who appear suddenly and claim they have right to the client’s money.

**E.3 What can you do about Financial Abuse with your Clients?**

It’s important to watch your clients carefully for signs of financial abuse. Report any suspicions to your supervisor. **Never** take money from your client, even if it’s offered as a gift. It may be seen as financial abuse by others, especially if the client is not of right mind to be giving it away. It’s important to avoid buying food and other necessities for your client’s. If you notice your client cannot provide basic groceries and necessities for themselves tell your supervisor immediately. There are community resources to help them. Your employer is not obligated to pay you back for anything you spend shopping for your client.



**F. Understanding Neglect and Self Neglect**

## F.1 What is Neglect and Self Neglect?

Neglect occurs when a caregiver or family member that is responsible for care of someone, fails to fulfill their caretaking responsibility, putting the person needing care at risk for harm. Examples of neglect by a caregiver or caretaker:

* Leaving a client unsupervised
* Falling asleep on duty
* Delaying routine medical or dental visits
* Isolating a senior
* Leaving a senior unattended for a long period of time, ex: Not repositioning a bed ridden client after 2 hours
* Failing to seek medical help for symptoms of injury, illness, or pain
* Delaying assistance with ADLs such as eating, toileting, repositioning, or incontinent care

Neglect is the most common type of child and elder mistreatment. The number of children and elderly persons being neglected has increased considerably in the last ten years.

**Self neglect** occurs when an individual fails to tend to their own personal or safety needs.

## F.2 What are Signs of Neglect?

The most common signs of neglect, whether is neglect from a caregiver or self-neglect, noticed are:

* Being left dirty or unbathed.
* Staying in an environment that is dirty (smells of urine or feces) or unlivable. Also, the presence of animal urine or feces.
* Staying in an environment that has health or safety hazards such as no heat, electricity, or running water.
* Presence of rashes, sores or lice.
* They do not have enough clothes to stay warm or comfortable.
* Dehydration and/or poor nutrition
* Untreated medical conditions.
* Not receiving enough or taking adequate medications to maintain health.

**F.3 What you can do about Neglect and Your Clients**

Watch your clients closely for signs of neglect or self-neglect. Remember that many victims of self-neglect also suffer from depression. For some clients, if their depression is treated, they will stop the self-neglect and continue their care, with or without assistance.

Suicide among seniors is not uncommon. The number of elderly people attempting to commit suicide is gradually increasing. Talk to your supervisor immediately if your client talks about wanting to commit suicide, says things like, “I have no reason to live.”, or tells you about a plan to end their life by taking pills or use of other means.

**G. Reporting Abuse and Neglect Do’s and Don’ts!**

It is your obligation as a caregiver to protect your clients from harm and report any potential signs of abuse and neglect to your supervisor or relevant authorities **immediately.**

**G.1 The “Do’s” of Reporting!**

* Keep your suspicions about possible abuse and neglect confidential. Document and report the situation according to your workplace policy but do not talk about to anyone who does not need to know.
* Let your supervisor know if your client’s family members or other caregivers seem stressed. Abuse is more likely so occur when caregiver are stressed out.
* Tell your supervisor immediately if you are a victim of abuse by a family member or client.
* Remember that keeping quiet about abuse and neglect of your clients is against the law in all but 8 states. For example, in California, if you fail to report what you know, you could face jail time and up to $1, 000 in fines.
* Remember that you are not expected to ***prove*** that a client is being abused or neglected. That is up to the authorities conducting the investigation. You are expected to report things that you have actually seen or heard that seem ***suspicious.***
* ***Be sure just to report the facts about the situation.***
* Make sure you are clear when it comes to your responsibilities about reporting abuse and neglect.

**G.2 The “Don’ts” of Reporting!**

* Do not jump to conclusions. Stick to facts when reporting any situation.
* Do not try to solve abuse and neglect situations on your own, without reporting it to the appropriate authorities.
* Do not stay quit about signs of abuse and neglect because you “don’t want to get involved.”
* Do not wait for proof of abuse first before you report it. If you have reason to believe it is happening, report it. It could save your client’s life.
* Do not forget you will not get in trouble for reporting suspected abuse. Even if the authorities do not find any abuse or the client refuses help.



All staff, volunteers, and Affiliated Home Care Aides shall report any suspected or known dependent adult or elder abuse as required by Section 15630 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code and suspected or known child abuse as required by Sections 11164 to 11174.3, inclusive, of the Penal Code.