

Abuse and Neglect in Care Settings

Caredemy

Online Training Academy



Course Name:

Abuse and Neglect in Care Settings

Course Description:

This course will give an overview of abuse and neglect in care settings and the role health and social care workers play in working with and identifying vulnerable adults.

Course Learning Objectives:

At the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

- Understand what causes an adult to be at risk for abuse
- Describe the different types of abuse that effects adults
- Describe how you can prevent abuse by promoting well-being and dignity
- Understand how you can work in a person-centered and empowering way with adults
- Describe how to raise concerns when abuse is suspected

Course Requirements:

Participants must complete all learning modules and pass the multiple-choice course assessment.



Introduction

Health and social care workers, including non-clinical and voluntary staff, have a statutory duty to protect adults in their care.

There are individuals who are vulnerable to abuse because of a health condition or their unique situation, such as having high care needs and not being able to fully protect themselves. Adults can suffer from a range of different types of abuse such as physical abuse, neglect, and financial abuse.

Your Role

You play an important role in protecting adults receiving care services. You should:

- Develop observational skills
- Prevent abuse by learning to identify those at risk
- Treat all people with dignity and respect to remove risk of abuse
- Know the signs that may indicate abuse is occurring
- Record what you have observed
- Know who to contact

Identifying, Reporting, and Preventing Abuse and Neglect

Recognizing behaviors indicative of abuse or neglect, understanding the legal ramifications of such actions, and being equipped with knowledge on prevention and reporting protocols are essential in protecting individuals from harm.

Abuse and neglect are grave concerns prevalent both within our communities and senior care facilities. Vulnerable individuals, such as children and seniors who are unable to fully care for themselves, are particularly susceptible to these forms of mistreatment.

It is imperative for caregivers in adult and senior care settings to be well-versed in recognizing and addressing abuse and neglect. This not only protects the caregivers themselves but also ensures the safety and well-being of those under their care.



Observational Skills

There are two types of observational skills:

Objective Observations: Fact-based and reported in the same manner by everyone. These observations are not biased and are measurable. Examples include recording a bruise 2cm in diameter on a person's arm, finding messy conditions or bodily fluids on a person's clothing or bedding, recording a sore on a body part.

Subjective Observations: Personal opinions, assumptions, or interpretations of one's view of an event. These observations should not be used to inform decision making. Examples include: a person complaining of a headache because they do not want to wear a hat, assuming a family member is too lazy to visit the person receiving care.

Risk and Abuse

There are several forms of abuse:

Physical Abuse: Examples include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, biting, pushing, rough handling, scalding or burning, physical punishment, inappropriate use of restraints, making someone purposefully uncomfortable (i.e. cold), involuntary confinement or isolation, misuse of medication (i.e. sedation), forcible feeding or withholding food, restricting movement

Domestic Abuse: Any incident/s of controlling, coercive, or threatening behavior or violence between those aged 1 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse. Includes controlling or coercive behaviors.

Controlling: Acts designed to make a person subordinate or dependent through isolation, exploiting resources and capacities for personal gain, or depriving a person of the means for independence.

Coercion: Assault, threats, intimidation, or humiliation used to frighten, harm, or punish another.

Sexual Abuse: Direct or indirect involvement of the adult at risk in relationships or sexual activity which they do not want or do not consent to, cannot understand or have the mental capacity to consent to, or have been coerced into



because the other person has a position of power or authority. Sexual abuse can include intercourse, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate touching or looking, teasing, innuendo, sexual photography, or subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts. Opportunistic abuse occurs when someone sees a chance to sexually assault someone, or planned, which is when someone is deliberately targeted.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse: Actions or behaviors that are harmful to the emotional health of another. Examples include threats, deprivation of contact, shouting, ignoring, bullying, cruelty, coercion, humiliation, or negating the right of the person to make choices, undermining their self-esteem.

Financial/Material Abuse: Use of the person's assets, property, income, funds or resources without their authorization or consent. Can include fraud, theft, exploitation, undue pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance, or financial transactions, misuse or misappropriation of benefits, possessions, or property, and the misuse of the enduring power of attorney, lasting power of attorney, or appointeeship.

Modern Slavery: Slavery, human trafficking, force or compulsory behavior, or domestic servitude. Slave masters and traffickers use any means necessary to coerce, deceive, or force others into a life of servitude, abuse, and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory Abuse: Values, beliefs, or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to people or groups. Results from situations that exploit another's vulnerability by treating them in a way that excludes them from opportunities they should have as equal citizens such as education, justice, health, and access to services. This can be motivated by age, being a transsexual person, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion or lack of religion, being pregnant, or having a child with a disability.

Organizational Abuse: Mistreatment, abuse, or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals. This can occur within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, violating their human rights and dignity. This can occur when routines, systems, and regimes of an organization result in poor or inadequate standards of care and poor practices in care homes, day cares, supportive housing, hospitals, and sheltered housing.



Neglect and Acts of Omission: The failure of a person who has responsibilities for the charge, care, or custody of an at-risk adult to provide the type and amount of care any reasonable person would be expected to provide. May include failure to provide social, educational, or medical needs, withholding food, drink, or warmth, and not protecting from hazards.

Self-Neglect: A person may choose to self-neglect themselves, often because they do not want to acknowledge a problem or want to refuse support services. An underlying condition affecting mental capacity may also cause self-neglect.

Being Alert

By being alert, you can identify the signs and symptoms of abuse. Depending on the nature of your relationship with the adult, you may notice signs or changes that indicate abuse quickly. There are 3 areas to consider if you suspect abuse:

1. **Physical Signs:** Evidence of bodily harm
2. **Behavioral Signs:** Thinking about the person's behavior, does it add to concerns or decrease them?
3. **Other Factors:** What do you know about the person's family history, and other carers?

Signs of Physical Abuse

Signs of physical abuse include:

- Cuts, bruises, puncture wounds, burns, broken bones, black eyes
- Untreated injuries
- Poor skin condition or hygiene
- Signs of dehydration, malnutrition, or weight loss
- Soiled clothing or bedding
- Broken glasses or other signs of being punished or restrained
- Inappropriate use of medication
- The person verbally telling you they have been physically abused



Signs of Domestic Abuse

Signs of domestic abuse include:

- Physical and sensory impairments
- Emotional harm (loss of confidence, self-esteem)
- Isolation from family and friends
- Loss of independence or independent income
- Substance misuse
- Cuts, burns, bruises, fractures, lost teeth or hair

Individuals experiencing domestic abuse may experience increased physical or mental disability, increased dependency or powerlessness, increased shame about impairments, or a reluctance to use essential routine medical services or personal care.

Complexities of Domestic Abuse

The term domestic abuse refers to abuse in any relationship including female partners abusing male partners and vice versa, abuse in LGBT relationships, or intergenerational abuse where the victim and perpetrator are adult siblings. Domestic abuse can include other forms of abuse such as neglect and emotional abuse. Disabled women and both men and women with severe mental illness were found to be at a higher risk of domestic and sexual abuse.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Signs of sexual abuse include:

- Bruising around breasts or genital area
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infection
- Difficulty standing or walking
- Changes in behavior
- Stained, torn, or bloodied underclothes
- Person tells you they have been sexually assaulted or raped

Sexual abuse is a crime and often the person who has been abused will tell carers that something is wrong. It is important to recognize that individuals with learning disabilities or dementia will be able to communicate aspects of their



assault, although they may be confused about when it happened and what exactly happened.

Signs of Psychological or Emotional Abuse

Signs of psychological or emotional abuse include:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Hesitation to speak properly
- Anger with no apparent cause
- Sudden behavioral changes
- Emotionally upset or angered
- Unexplained fear
- Withdrawn or uncommunicative
- Unusual 'comfort' behaviors such as rocking, biting, or sucking
- Person tells you they are being verbally or emotionally abused

Signs of Financial Abuse

Signs of financial abuse include:

- Signs of forged documents or cheques
- Sudden changes in bank accounts or unexplained, large withdrawals
- Inclusion of additional person's names to accounts
- Abrupt changes to wills
- Unpaid bills that are paid by someone else
- Concern by another that excessive amounts of money are being spent on the person's care
- Lack of normal utilities the person should be able to afford
- Unexplained disappearance of valuable items
- Isolation from family or friends

Complexities of Financial Abuse

Financial or material abuse is a crime. The issue may be straightforward, such as a care worker that was witnessed stealing money. However, there may be situations where the issue is complex because it involves family members misusing Lasting Powers of Attorney or stealing. For example, a family member may argue that the money will be theirs eventually, so they are not really stealing.



Signs of Modern Slavery

Signs of modern slavery include:

- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Appearing unkempt, withdrawn, or malnourished
- Isolation from the community
- Living in dirty or overcrowded accommodations
- Living and working at the same address
- Lack of personal items or identification documents
- Always wearing the same clothing
- Avoiding eye contact, appearing frightened, or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcement
- Unusual travel time or work patterns
- Fear of seeking help or support
- Fearful of being deported or discovered

Spotting a victim of modern slavery is challenging as many go unnoticed or are kept isolated from others.

Discriminatory Abuse

Signs of discriminatory abuse include:

- Fearfulness and anxiety
- Expressions of anger, frustration, fear, or anxiety
- Being refused or excluded from accessing services
- Tendency to be withdrawn or isolated
- Resistance or refusal to access services

Signs of Organizational Abuse

Signs of organizational abuse include:

- Inadequate staffing
- People appearing hungry, dehydrated, or unkempt
- Poor standards of care and record keeping practices
- Few social, educational, or recreational activities
- Lack or absence of individual care plans
- Lack of flexibility and choice for persons using the service



Neglect or Acts of Omission

Signs of neglect or omission include:

- Appearing malnourished, dehydrated, or dirty
- Excrement or urine smells
- Dirty home or safety hazards present
- Untreated medical conditions
- Withholding or over-medicating
- Inadequate clothing
- Rashes, sores, or lice

Not all neglect is intentional. It can happen when caregivers are not being sufficiently supported or cannot cope with the situation. This can lead to passive or unintentional neglect.

Signs of Self-Neglect

Signs of self-neglect include:

- Poor hygiene or unkempt appearance
- Malnutrition or dehydration
- Lack of food, clothing and shelter
- Living in unsanitary conditions
- Hoarding items or animals
- Neglecting household maintenance
- Non-compliance with health or care services
- Not taking medication to treat injury or illness

Taking Action

There are actions you can take if you suspect an adult is at risk. However, many wait until it is too late. This can happen due to:

Bystander Effect: The presence of others discourages a person from intervening. This can be due to a perceived diffusion of responsibility (onlookers are more likely to intervene when there are few or no witnesses) or social influence (monitoring the behavior of those around you and deciding how to act).

Culture of Organization: An organization with a corrupt and debased culture can cause others to act in a manner they normally wouldn't.



When to Report a Concern

Any paid or unpaid health and social care worker has a duty to act when they suspect abuse is occurring. The adult at risk may have been, is currently, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. You should escalate concerns when you have witnessed inappropriate treatment or behavior towards a person who is:

Concerns can be raised about a partner, relative, or friend, a neighbor, a paid caregiver or volunteer, a health or social care worker, another vulnerable adult, a non-caregiver or stranger, or an organization who cares for vulnerable adults.

When you need to report, you should:

- Keep your suspicions confidential
- Report the item to your Care Manager
- Report only the facts
- Document any specific incidents when you observe them
- Do not make assumptions

Keep in mind, it's a legal obligation to report instances of adult and elder abuse and neglect as a caregiver. Failure to report can result in fines or even legal consequences, as mandated by law in most states. Across the United States, each state operates a dedicated department staffed with trained professionals tasked with investigating allegations of elder abuse. These experts are equipped to effectively manage and address reported cases of abuse or neglect.

When Someone Turns to You

If an adult at risk raises a concern with you, you should:

- Assure them you are taking the matter seriously
- Listen carefully, remain calm, and get as clear of an understanding possible without asking too many questions
- Do not give promises of confidentiality
- Explain you have a duty to tell your manager or another responsible individual
- Ask them what they would like to happen in response to raising the concern
- Explain you will take steps to protect them from further abuse or neglect
- Provide support and information that is most appropriate for them
- Do not discuss the concern with the person alleged to have caused harm



Record Keeping

It is important to have a written record of any incident or allegation of abuse. These records must be accurate and kept safe as evidence. To make an accurate report, you should include:

- Date, time, and place of the incident/s
- What the adult at risk said using their own words
- Appearance and behavior of the adult at risk
- Body map of any injuries
- Name and signature of the person making the record
- Write down what you saw if you witnessed the incident
- Opinions stated as such
- Information from others attributed to them

Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to any form of maltreatment of a person by a caregiver, family member, or friend. Risk factors for child abuse can include living in an area with high poverty, unemployment, or crime rates, the child having a physical and/or mental disability, and an abuser having history of physical or sexual abuse as a child. There are special considerations for child abuse that differ from those of an adult:

- Neglect: Applies to parents leaving a child with no one to care for him/her or leaving a child with a caretaker and not returning or making other arrangements for his/her care.
- Financial Exploitation: Includes using a child for material gain, including forcing a child to panhandle, steal or perform other illegal or involuntary activities.

All persons responsible for the care of a child have a duty to report abuse and neglect. This is known as mandatory reporting. Reports should be made to Child Protective Services or to the police. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911.

