

## Neglect as a Type of Abuse

---

Much of the neglect faced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) is hidden<sup>1</sup>. Direct support professionals (DSPs) should be aware of what neglect looks like and what to do to prevent that abuse for the individuals they support.

### What is Neglect?

As defined by the California Welfare and Institutions Code: Neglect is an act or a failure to act by a person responsible for providing services and/or supports to a person with I/DD. Types of neglect includes the failure to establish or carry out an appropriate individual program or treatment plan, provide adequate nutrition, appropriate clothing, or health care. Neglect also includes situations when a person lives in an unsafe environment, lacks enough trained staff, fails to take appropriate steps to prevent self-abuse, harassment, or assault by a peer.<sup>2</sup>

### What Does Neglect Look Like?

Neglect can take many forms. For example:



#### Physical Neglect

- Refusing to help an individual who needs help to eat, go to the bathroom, or stay clean and well-groomed
- Withholding medical care, including medical equipment like hearing aids
- Lack of nutrition and dietary needs
- Inadequate sleeping, cooking, or bathing arrangements
- Lack of appropriate support – leaving an individual with disabilities unsupervised or placing the person in a potentially dangerous situation
  - Leaving an individual who requires all day (or almost constant) support alone can be neglect

#### Emotional Neglect

- Causing emotional pain
- Distress or anguish by ignoring
- Belittling
- Isolating individuals

Neglect may include an individual's **self-neglect** or behavior that threatens their own health or safety.

---

<sup>1</sup> Abuse and Exploitation of People with Developmental Disabilities:  
<https://disabilityjustice.org/justice-denied/abuse-and-exploitation/>

<sup>2</sup> Welfare and Institutions code:  
[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=4900&lawCode=WIC](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=4900&lawCode=WIC)

## **Who Should You Talk To?**

As a DSP, you are a mandated reporter. That means you must report any incidents of neglect that you witness, hear about, or suspect, to the regional center, police, and/or any other adult protective services agencies. Check with your Administrator to learn more!

## **Additional Resources**

- California Department of Social Services - Adult Protective Services  
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/adult-protective-services>
- National Adult Protective Services: <https://www.napsa-now.org/>
- End Abuse of People with Disabilities:  
<https://www.endabusepwd.org/solutions/strengthen-prevention/>