

# Understanding and Recognizing Abuse

# Understanding the Types of Abuse

- Abuse is any action in which one person intentionally harms or injures another person
- Abuse can come in many forms
- **There are five main types of abuse:**
  1. Physical Abuse
  2. Emotional Abuse
  3. Sexual Abuse
  4. Financial Abuse
  5. Abuse by Neglect

**Any type of abuse can really hurt the individuals you support and can ruin lives.**

**All incidents of suspected abuse must be reported.**

# Physical Abuse

- When someone hurts or harms another person's body on purpose
- Includes: hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, shaking, burning, biting, etc.
- **Signs of Physical Abuse:**
  - Unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches, or scars
  - Broken bones or other injuries
  - Torn or bloody clothing
  - Swelling
  - Breathing problems from drowning, suffocation, or poisoning



# Emotional or Psychological Abuse

- When someone tries to control another person by criticizing, embarrassing, shaming, blaming, or manipulating them
- Sometimes emotional abuse can be inflicted on a person as a result of a different type of abuse
- **Signs of Emotional Abuse:**
  - Sudden fear of a person or place
  - Mood swings or depression
  - Inability to sleep, nightmares
  - Withdrawal from social situations like school or work

# Sexual Abuse

- Any kind of unwanted sexual activity, which usually includes physical contact
- When someone uses force, makes threats, or takes advantage of someone who doesn't or cannot consent
- **Signs of Sexual Abuse:**
  - Vaginal or rectal pain or bleeding
  - Torn or bloody clothing
  - Frequent or recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)



# Financial Abuse or Exploitation

- When someone tries to control another person's ability to acquire, use, or keep their money or resources
- Could happen in relationships, or through scams online or over the phone
- **Signs of Financial Abuse:**
  - Missing money or credit cards
  - Unpaid bills, eviction notices or discontinued utilities
  - Changes in spending patterns or ATM withdrawals

# Abuse by Neglect

- Neglect is a form of abuse when someone who is responsible for caring for another person fails to do so
- Neglect could be perpetrated by a parent, direct support professional (DSP), or other types of caretakers
- **Signs of Abuse by Neglect:**
  - Poor grooming, dirty clothes, matted or unclean hair
  - Malnutrition and dehydration
  - Medical conditions that go untreated
  - Clutter, filth or bad smell in the home

# Talking About Abuse

- With each individual they support, DSPs should talk about touch and the individual's personal boundaries
  - For the DSP-supported individual relationship
  - For other relationships with friends, family, or significant others
- **If you notice a potentially abusive situation,**
  - **Come prepared** with a checklist of questions you could ask
  - **Be open-minded** and approachable – allow the individual time to answer questions and to ask their own questions
  - **Be honest** – “sugarcoating” could lead to more abuse
  - **Try to stay calm**

# Reporting Abuse

All abuse must be reported.



- If you think the situation might be abusive, report it!
- If suspected abuse/neglect occurs in a licensed facility and results in serious bodily injury, **you must notify local law enforcement immediately - no later than 2 hours** after the reporter learns of the abuse

# Reporting Abuse – Beyond Law Enforcement

- Suspected abuse/neglect incidents must be reported within **one business day** after learning about the incident to the regional center and to at least one of these other agencies:
  - **For all individuals:** Local law enforcement and regional center service coordinator
  - **Individuals living in a licensed home:** Licensing Agency, Adult Protective Service, and the Ombudsman
  - **Adults and the elderly:** Adult Protective Services
  - **Children:** Child Protective Services

# National Resources on Abuse

- National Domestic Violence Hotline:  
<https://www.thehotline.org/>
- Stop Abuse for Everyone:  
<https://www.stopabuseforeveryone.org/>
- End Abuse of People with Disabilities:  
<https://www.endabusepwd.org/>



# California Resources on Abuse

- Session 3 of California DSP training ([https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DSPT\\_StudentYear1FullVersion\\_20190308.pdf](https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DSPT_StudentYear1FullVersion_20190308.pdf))
- Disability Rights California's Abuse, Neglect, and Crimes Against People with Disabilities program: <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/what-we-do/programs/abuse-neglect-and-crimes-against-people-with-disabilities>
- California Victim Compensation Board: <https://victims.ca.gov/victims/>
- California Partnership to End Domestic Violence: <https://www.cpedv.org/>

# Looking for Local Programs?

- WomensLaw.org has identified many local programs by county in California
- Check out: <https://www.womenslaw.org/find-help/ca/advocates-and-shelters/local-programs>

# Additional Resources by Abuse Type

- **Physical Abuse**

- <https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-is-physical-abuse>
- <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/abuse/what-is-physical-abuse-and-how-do-you-identify-a-victim/>

- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**

- <https://www.relias.com/blog/verbal-abuse-impact-on-people-with-disabilities>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/identify-and-cope-with-emotional-abuse-4156673>

# Additional Resources by Abuse Type (2)

- **Sexual Abuse**

- California Coalition against Sexual Assault:  
<http://www.calcasa.org/>
- Illinois State campaign “Imagines Project” doc on Women with Disabilities and Sexual Abuse (2010):  
<http://accessingsafe.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/mini-module-4-education-guide.pdf>

- **Financial Abuse or Exploitation**

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/financial-abuse-4155224>
- <https://nnedv.org/content/about-financial-abuse/>

# Additional Resources by Abuse Type (3)

- **Abuse by Neglect:**

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/love-and-sex-in-the-digital-age/201904/neglect-is-form-abuse>
- <https://disabilityjustice.org/medical-or-physical-neglect/>