

## Understanding and Recognizing Abuse

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This tip sheet is a companion to the presentation “Understanding and Recognizing Abuse.”

### 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

Abuse can change the way a person’s brain and body work. **All abuse must be reported.**



### 1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone causes intentional harm to another person’s body. This might include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, shaking, burning, and biting.

#### Here Are Some 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

#### Physical Abuse Resources:

- <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/>

### 2. Emotional or Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is 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 other types of abuse.

#### Here Are Some 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

#### Emotional or Psychological Abuse Resources:

- <https://www.relias.com/blog/verbal-abuse-impact-on-people-with-disabilities>

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/identify-and-cope-with-emotional-abuse-4156673>

### 3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any kind of unwanted sexual activity, typically involving physical contact. Abuse happens when a person uses force, makes threats, or takes sexual advantage of another person who does not or cannot consent.

#### Here Are Some Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Vaginal or rectal pain or bleeding
- Torn or bloody clothing
- Frequent or recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)



#### Sexual Abuse Resources:

- 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>

### 4. Financial Abuse or Exploitation

Financial abuse is when someone tries to control another person's ability to acquire, use, or keep their money or resources. This could happen in relationships, or through scams online or over the phone.

#### Here Are Some Signs of Financial Abuse:

- Missing money or credit cards
- Unpaid bills, eviction notices or discontinued utilities
- Changes in spending patterns or ATM withdrawals

#### Financial Abuse or Exploitation

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

### 5. Abuse by Neglect

Neglect is a form of abuse. It can happen when DSPs, parents, or other caregivers abandon their responsibility to care for people needing support.

#### Here Are Some Signs of Neglect:

- Frequent UTIs
- Poor grooming, dirty clothes, matted or unclean hair
- Malnutrition and dehydration
- Medical conditions that go untreated
- Clutter, filth or bad smell in the home

### Abuse by Neglect Resources:

- <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/>

### Talking About Abuse

DSPs should talk with an individual about their personal physical boundaries.

If you notice a potentially abusive situation,

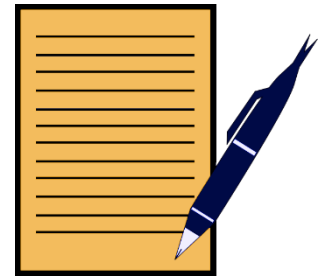
- Come prepared with a checklist of questions you could ask
- Be open-minded and approachable – allow the individual time to answer questions and to ask their own questions
- Be honest – “sugarcoating” could lead to more abuse
- Try to stay calm

### Reporting Abuse

#### **All abuse must be reported.**

If you think the situation might be abusive, report it!

If suspected abuse 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



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

### Resources on Abuse

#### National Resources:

- 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/>
- National Grassroots resources: <https://ncadv.org/resources>

#### California Resources:

- 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)

## Tip Sheet

- 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:

<https://www.womenslaw.org/find-help/ca/advocates-and-shelters/local-programs>