

chapter 10

RECOGNIZING ABUSE & NEGLECT

There are several different types of abuse, some of which are more obvious than others. The following are the types of abuse or violation of rights that often occur. We've also included the signs to look for.

TYPES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is perhaps the most obvious, and is usually easier to detect than other forms of abuse. The most common types of physical abuse are:

- Assault — hitting, shaking, pushing, shoving, kicking, burning, choking, scratching, rough-handling, cutting, biting, physically confining, forcibly confining or restraining into a room, a chair, a bed;
- Forcibly feeding;
- Forcibly medicating;
- Over-medicating;
- Sexually molesting;
- Any sexual activity with an adult who is unable to understand or give consent;
- Inflicting pornography, voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc.;
- Control of an adult through the use of threats or intimidation or through the abuse of a relationship of trust;

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- Prolonged intervals between an injury and the treatment;
- Frequent changes in doctors.

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

The most common signs of physical abuse are:

- Cuts, scrapes, burns, puncture wounds, marks indicating use of restraints.
- Bruises, discoloration, swelling.
- Difficulty moving.
- Stiffness (trouble walking or sitting). The resident may have been injured internally or suffered broken bones with no external signs.
- Genital infections or pain in the groin area.

Ask the resident what happened. Do they have an explanation for the injury? Is it believable, or do the injuries lead you to a different conclusion?

TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

There are varying degrees of psychological / emotional abuse. Often, this type of abuse is difficult to detect, particularly if you do not witness interactions between the abuser and the resident. The most common types of psychological abuse are:

- Threatening residents (threatening to physically harm residents, threatening to take away their rights, threatening to sell their property, threatening to place them in confinement, threatening to take the residents' power to make choices, etc.);
- Humiliating residents or treating them like children;

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- Verbal abuse, insults, name calling;

SIGNS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

The most common signs of psychological abuse are:

- Helplessness;
- Hesitation to talk openly;
- Agitation and/or trouble sleeping;
- Withdrawal and/or depression;
- Implausible stories;
- Fear in the presence of the caregiver;
- Constant deferral to the caregiver, including waiting for the caregiver to answer a question which was posed to the resident;
- Decision-making by the caregiver without deferring or consulting with the resident;
- Resident not accepting/allowing visitors.

TYPES OF NEGLECT

Whether intentional or unintentional, any time residents are left in an unsafe environment or they are not receiving proper care, they are being neglected. The most common types of neglect are:

- Withholding treatment (failing to administer medications, failing to provide physical therapy when needed, not taking to doctor's appointments, etc.);
- Failing to provide assistance with Activities of Daily Living (e.g., toileting, bathing, transferring, eating, etc.), when necessary;
- Withholding food;

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- Failing to ensure proper diet;
- Abandoning the resident;
- Failing to provide basic needs - food, clothing, shelter, medicine, medical aids not properly or timely administered.

SIGNS OF NEGLECT

The most common signs of neglect are:

- Malnourishment;
- Dehydration;
- Weight loss;
- Not receiving proper medical care (under or over medicated, missing doctor's appointments, etc.);
- Lacking necessary medical aids (walker, wheelchair, hearing aid, dentures, etc.);
- The presence of pressure sores;
- Inadequate personal hygiene;
- Inadequate and/or inappropriate clothing;
- Inadequate and/or inappropriate supervision;
- Extreme filth of person or surrounding;
- Pest/rodent infestation;
- Offensive odors;
- Inadequate heat, fuel, electricity, refrigeration;
- Untreated physical or mental health problems;
- Abandonment;

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- Dilapidated housing condition;
- Soiled bedding.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse, technically called “exploitation,” is common among residents and takes on many different forms. Often caregivers coerce residents into selling their property, or giving or loaning them money. Caregivers may obtain the same results through fraud, forgery, and through the crimes of larceny, embezzlement, theft by false pretenses, burglary, false impersonation, and extortion. The most common types of financial abuse are:

- Withholding money belonging to the resident;
- Forcing a resident to sell or give property away;
- Stealing money from a resident;
- Coercing a resident to give away money;
- Borrowing money from a resident and failing to repay it.

SIGNS OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

The most common signs of financial abuse are:

- The resident cannot explain the disappearance of funds in bank account;
- The resident’s personal property is missing and he/she has no explanation;
- The resident is suddenly spending a great deal of money;
- The resident suddenly withdraws a lot of money from accounts;

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- The resident is unable to pay his or her bills;
- The caregiver does not give the resident an opportunity to speak for him or herself;
- The caregiver is defensive;
- The caregiver gives conflicting accounts of incidents reported by the others (i.e. incidents reported by the resident, family members, friends, neighbors, other health care professionals);
- The caregiver has drug or alcohol problems;
- The caregiver has history of past abuse;
- The caregiver's affection is inappropriate (flirtations, coyness, or other indications that there may be an inappropriate sexual relationship).