

Welcome and Orientation – Video 3

Abuse & Exploitation

(Introductory music and images)

Speaker appears in comfortable, neutral “home” setting. At times words and pictures will appear next to them or in place of them to support the dialogue.

It is important to be aware of the types of abuse most often experienced by persons with a guardian and older adults so you can help keep them safe and respond to any signs of abuse you notice. Keep an eye out for any changes in the person's mood or behavior so you can explore what led to the change.

If the person is in a residential facility, it is important to maintain contact with the person by visiting frequently and checking in with them over the phone. Try to maintain consistent communication with their caregivers between visits. Your frequent contact may help prevent potential abuse or allow you to notice and respond to any abuse quickly.

There are several types of abuse to be aware of, including physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse; financial exploitation; neglect; and self-neglect.

While abuse takes on many forms such as physical violence, theft of money or property, insults and harassment, and failure to provide necessities for safety and well-being, it is always harmful and far too common. According to the National Council on Aging, one in ten Americans aged 60+ have experienced elder abuse, and that number increases to nearly one in two when the individual has dementia.

Almost 60% of abuse or neglect incidents involve an abuser who is a family member.

Also, according to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, the rate of violence against individuals with disabilities is almost four times the rate for individuals without a disability.

Abuse can happen in any setting including the incapacitated person's home, community, and residential facilities. Risk factors for abuse include chronic medical and mental health conditions, cognitive impairment, physical, financial, and emotional dependence, history of poor family relationships between the older adult and their caregiver, caregiver burden, social isolation, and lack of access to support and resources.

Be sure to follow up on any concerns and alert those who can investigate further if abuse is suspected. As a guardian, you are responsible for the incapacitated person's safety and wellbeing. If you have concerns, do not hesitate to inform the court about your concerns and also to contact one of the following.

9-1-1 for serious and immediate danger or emergencies.

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The Pennsylvania Elder Abuse Hotline and Adult Protective Services for non-emergency situations. Reports can be made anonymously by calling 1-800-490-8505 and reporters have legal protections from retaliation, discrimination, and prosecution. For adults age 60+ and adults ages 18-59 with disabilities or who have a guardian, the Hotline takes reports of potential abuse regardless of whether the person lives at home, or in another setting. Adult Protective Services will investigate all reports.

The Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program offers support and advocacy for older adults receiving long-term care, whether in a facility or receiving community-based services. Call 717-783-8975 to speak with state certified staff and volunteers from the Department of Aging who respond to concerns of older adults and their loved ones.

The local Area Agency on Aging, or, triple A, will also accept reports of suspected abuse and coordinate with Adult Protective Services. Visit the Pennsylvania Department of Aging website to find the contact information of the agency serving the county where the incapacitated person lives.

The Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General focuses on abuse and fraud perpetrated by businesses and other consumer protection issues. Their Senior Assistance Helpline phone number is 1-866-623-2137. Complaints can also be made electronically on their website, <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/protect-yourself/seniors/>.

As a guardian, you play a crucial role in the prevention of elder abuse, as well as in the response to abuse when it occurs. To learn more about elder abuse warning signs, visit the National Council on Elder Abuse website or take the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's Elder Abuse Awareness web-based training.

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