



Home Care

Association of America

Elder Abuse Guidelines

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Purpose

Elder abuse is a serious problem affecting hundreds of thousands of older persons each year. Professionals in the field of aging are in a unique position to recognize this problem and initiate intervention. HCAOA supports the development of policies and procedures by its member agencies to reduce the incidence of elder abuse, and to recognize it and respond properly when it is encountered.

Definitions

Authorities commonly divide elder abuse into the following categories:

Physical abuse – Any type of physical force or violence that results in body injury or pain, including inappropriate use of restraint.

Sexual abuse – Non-consensual sexual contact, or including sexual contact with a person unable to give consent.

Emotional or psychological abuse – Deliberate infliction of emotional anguish or distress through harassment, threat, intimidation or other verbal or non-verbal behavior.

Neglect – The failure or refusal to carry out a person’s duties to an elder, including the provision of basic life necessities and fulfillment of fiduciary responsibilities.

Abandonment – Desertion of an older person by someone who has custody or care responsibilities.

Financial abuse – The improper or unlawful use or exploitation of an older person’s financial assets or material possessions.

Self-neglect – Behavior that threatens an elder’s own health or safety.

Recognizing Signs of Elder Abuse

Member agencies should develop and publicize to all employees policies and procedures for recognizing signs of elder abuse among their clients or prospective clients. The policies and procedures should include reference to the specific features of each category of abuse. Agencies should have in place clear guidelines for reporting suspected abuse to managers and for documenting abuse appropriately.

Training Employees

Education is an essential prerequisite for preventing and responding appropriately to elder abuse. Member agencies should incorporate basic information about this problem into their orientation for new employees, in addition to providing each employee with the agency’s policies and procedures on elder abuse.



HCAOA supports the development of in-service training programs on elder abuse, customized to reflect the agency's policies and procedures, local resources and state laws. Many organizations publish training guides and programs on elder abuse. One excellent resource is the monograph entitled "*Developing Training Programs on Elder Abuse Prevention for In-Home Helpers: Issues and Guidelines*", published by the National Center on Elder Abuse.

Reporting Elder Abuse

Member agencies should have clear written policies and procedures for when and how to report suspected abuse to local Adult Protective Services units, law enforcement and other entities responsible for abuse investigations. Policies and procedures should be in compliance with local laws.

Elder Abuse Resources

The National Center for Elder Abuse (NCEA), along with its many partner organizations, serves as the most comprehensive national resource for professionals and the public. Its mission is to "promote understanding, knowledge sharing, and action on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation". The NCEA's website is www.elderabusecenter.org and phone is (222) 898-2586.