

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Care Provider Bulletin

Nov 2018



Did you know?

Physical, sexual and mental abuse; as well as neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation affect persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities daily.

Care providers:

- Have the power to help prevent abuse, abandonment, neglect and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults and the abuse and neglect of children.

Care providers must meet the following responsibilities to prevent abuse and neglect:

- Know the needs of the individuals supported and have the ability to provide those supports.
- Ask for training and assistance if necessary.
- Assess the situation and act upon what is observed.
- Inform supervisors and DSHS if the individual's support needs change or are unmet.

Red Flags – Indications of possible mistreatment

Vulnerable Person

- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate dress for weather conditions
- Unexplained bruises or skin tears
- Unexplained stained, torn or bloody underwear; bruises or bleeding, pain or itching in genital or anal areas
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Unexplained changes in behavior
- Depression or sadness
- Disturbance in sleeping or eating habits
- Vague physical complaints with no identifiable cause
- Verbalizations about feelings of worthlessness
- Crying or combativeness when a particular caregiver is on duty, when a certain person visits, or when they are around a certain person (e.g. bus driver)
- Pressure injuries
- Complaints that specific personal belongings are missing



Home Environment

- Lacking adequate mental stimulation or emotional support
- Evidence or the presence of health or safety hazards
- Physical or chemical restraints
- Inadequate provision of food or water
- Verbal assaults; intimidation or threats
- Financial exploitation with food or money

Who has to report?

- If caregivers are paid to provide care to a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities, they are considered mandatory reporters. They must report any suspected abuse or neglect, abandonment, or financial exploitation to proper authorities.
- Washington has laws requiring other groups, (such as law enforcement and medical providers) to also report suspected mistreatment.
- Mandatory reporters must follow the law at all times, not only during working hours.
- If a caregiver does not report suspected child or vulnerable adult mistreatment:
 - The individual being cared for could continue to be mistreated.
 - The caregiver could be held responsible for failure to report. In some cases, failing to report can result in criminal prosecution.

When to report

- Reports regarding vulnerable adults must be made “immediately,” per [RCW 74.34](#)
- Reports regarding abuse of children must be made “immediately,” and no longer than 48 hours per [RCW 26.44](#)

Who to report to

Call 1-866-END-HARM (1-866-363-4276) to report suspected child abuse or neglect or vulnerable adult abuse, abandonment, neglect or financial exploitation. Calls will be sent to the proper agency. For vulnerable adults, an [online](#) report may be filed.

Child Protective Services:

- Children under 18
- Children in foster care or licensed staffed residential programs (and alleged perpetrator is caregiver)

Adult Protective Services:

- Vulnerable adults
- Children 18-21 (if perpetrator not affiliated with foster care placement or licensed staff residential settings)

Residential Care Services:

- Agency/provider practice issues (adult licensed or certified residential settings)

Reporting to law enforcement:

- If the alleged victim is a child, report to law enforcement or Child Protective Services. However, best practice is to report to both.
- If the alleged victim is a vulnerable adult, caregivers must report to law enforcement in addition to Adult Protective Services in these situations:
 - Sexual assault
 - Physical assault (non-client to client)
 - Acts that cause fear of imminent harm
- Physical assault (client to client) that causes bodily injury requiring more than first aid or:
 - Injury on back, face, head, neck, chest, breasts, groin, inner thigh, buttock, genital, anal area
 - Fractures
 - Choking attempts
 - Patterns of assaults between the same clients or involving same client
 - Fear of imminent harm
 - If requested by client, legal rep or family regardless of injury

Report suspected abuse and neglect immediately. If someone may be in imminent danger or needs urgent help, call 911!

Medical Examiner/Coroner:

- Deaths suspected to be caused by abuse, neglect, or abandonment

When reporting

Those reporting will be asked to provide the information below. It is okay if not all of the information is available; still make a report:

- The alleged victim’s name, address, and contact information
- If the victim is a child – their age, and the name and address of their parent, or guardian
- The alleged perpetrator’s name, address, and contact information
- Details about what happened
- Other information that may be important, such as other similar incidents or allegations
- Contact information for follow-up questions from the investigator

Preventing abuse and neglect:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of abuse, abandonment, neglect, and financial exploitation.
- Talk to the person being cared for. Listening can provide opportunities for assistance.
- Teach the person about what abuse and neglect is, and what healthy relationships look like.
- Help them identify:
 - A trusted person they can talk to.
 - How to say “no.”
 - A plan for what they can do if someone is not treating them well.



Sources & Resources:

- [Reporting Suspected Abuse, Neglect, Self-Neglect or Financial Exploitation of Vulnerable Adults](#), Department of Social and Health Services’ Adult Protective Services
- [Report Child Abuse or Neglect](#), Department of Children, Youth and Families
- [Mandatory Reporter Toolkit](#), Department of Children, Youth and Families