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Understanding Abuse and Your Responsibilities as a Care Provider



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People with Disabilities and Abuse

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- Individuals with disabilities may be abused in their homes, institutions, medical settings, on buses or taxis, in schools or on the street.
- People with all types of disabilities are at higher risk and experience higher rates of violence because perpetrators seek vulnerable victims that are:
 - Easier to assault,
 - Less likely to report, and
 - Less likely to be believed.

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Statistics to consider

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- According to three separate studies, as many as 40%, 75%, and 97% of assaults went unreported (Criminal Justice and Behavior, Vol. 28, No. 6, 2001)
- 97% to 99% of abusers are known and trusted by the victim who has developmental disabilities (Sexuality and Disability, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1991)
- A barrier to reporting caregiver abuse could mean being placed in an institution, because other personal assistance is not available.

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Impact for persons with disabilities

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- Existing physical and mental health problems may be increased.
- A person with disabilities may already experience discrimination, and experience low self-esteem and self-doubt, which may be intensified.
- One person hurt is one too many.

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Cindy's Story

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Types of Abuse and Signs that it is happening

- Financial/Economic
- Neglect
- Emotional
- Verbal
- Physical
- Sexual

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+ Financial Abuse/ Economic Control

- Stealing or helping oneself to another's possessions without permission
- Not treating reports of theft seriously
- Borrowing from one resident for another resident without permission
- Not returning proper change after making purchases
- Forcing people to pay for food for someone else

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+ Financial Abuse Indicators

- Missing checks or credit cards
- Missing clothing
- Missing valuables
- Missing food or other personal belongings
- No spending money
- Bills for items the person didn't buy

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+ Neglect

- Withholding food, medicine or other items needed
- Not assisting when you know someone needs help
- Ignoring or postponing calls for help
- Forgetting or delaying help with eating, drinking, bathroom assistance, etc
- Leaving essentials out of reach (water, dentures, walker, call button, etc)

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+ Neglect Indicators

- Loss of weight
- Dirt under the fingernails, matted hair, body odor, or heavily soiled or stained clothes
- Reduced ability to walk
- Skin sores, rashes or other type of breakouts
- Symptoms of over or under medication
- Psychological indicators including withdrawal, change in behavior, depression, agitation, anger or demanding behavior

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+ Emotional Abuse

- Threatening with punishment if they do not behave
- Talking to about person as if they are not there
- Using demeaning language or ridicule
- Prohibiting free choice
- Not allowing to participate in activities
- Ignoring questions or comments
- Exposing body without concern for privacy

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+ Verbal Abuse

- Yelling
- Screaming
- Name calling
- Teasing
- Use of profanity
- Blaming
- Judgmental

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+ Verbal and Emotional Indicators

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- Changes in behavior- sudden or gradual over time
- Seemingly unjustified fear
- Unwarranted suspicion
- Denial of situation
- New or unexplained depression
- Lack of interest
- Change in activity level

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+ Physical Abuse

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- Hitting
- Beating
- Shoving
- Striking with object
- Squeezing roughly
- Scratching
- Biting
- Pinching
- Using overly hot or cold water
- Slapping
- Punching
- Spitting
- Pulling/twisting
- Tripping
- Burning
- Improper use of restraints
- Improper use of meds

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+ Physical Abuse Indicators

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- Bruises
- Swelling
- Change in walking
- Withdrawal
- Change in behavior
- Unusual fear
- Skin tears or cuts
- Limbs out of place
- Scratches
- Burns
- Unexpected depression
- Denial of situation

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+ Sexual Abuse

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- Fondling of another's private parts without consent
- Intimate touching of private parts during bathing
- Unwanted sexual advances or activity
- Any sexual activity that occurs when one or both parties do not consent

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+ Sexual Abuse

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- Sexual harassment
- Any sexual activity between a paid care provider and the client
- Unwanted sexual talk
- Unwanted sexual imagery or pornography
 - Photographs
 - Films
 - Video taping

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Signs & Indicators of Sexual Abuse

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- Physical:
 - Cuts and bruises
 - Difficulty in walking or sitting
 - Dirty or disheveled appearance
 - Skin breakouts, sore or lesions
 - Weight changes
 - Soreness, bruising, or bleeding genital area
 - Unusual discharge from genitalia or STI
 - Torn or bloody underwear

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+ Signs & Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Psychological
 - Withdrawal, depression or suicide
 - Sudden change in behavior
 - Non-compliance or overly willing to please
 - Change in sleeping or eating patterns
 - Erratic behavior (aggressive, angry or agitated)
 - Anger issues, difficulty controlling temper
 - Doesn't want to be touched
 - Unusual sexual behavior, expression or talk

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+ Ron's Story

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+ Care Provider Responsibilities and Mandatory Reporting

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+ Care Provider Responsibility

- Talk about abuse
 - Help them to understand abuse
 - Ask about abuse and believe what they say
 - Let them know they can trust you
- Recognize and look for signs of abuse
- Provide help
 - Make sure they are safe
 - Direct them to services and resources
 - Report responsibly
- (Courtesy of Temple University, PA)

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+ Utah Mandatory Reporting Requirements Regarding Elderly/Disabled

- Must report if there is a reason to believe that a vulnerable adult has been subjected to abuse, neglect or exploitation
- A "vulnerable adult" is an adult 65 years of age or older, or an adult who has a mental or physical impairment which substantially affects that person's ability to:
 - Provide personal protection
 - Provide necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, or mental or other health care
 - Obtain services necessary for health, safety, or welfare
 - Carry out the activities of daily living
 - Manage the adult's own resources
 - Comprehend the nature and consequences of remaining in a situation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation

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+ To Report or Not to Report?

- The victim has the right to have control over this process. However there will be some instances where mandatory reporting is required.
- Mandatory reporting laws can be overwhelming and confusing. You can always contact your local law enforcement officer for clarification or contact the 24-Hour Confidential Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis and Information Line at 1.888.421.1100 or the Statewide Domestic Violence LINK Line at 1.800.897.LINK (5465).

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+ What to Do if you Suspect Abuse

- Contact the authorities immediately
- Utah Aging and Adult Services: 1.800.371.7897
- Utah Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 1.855.323.3237
- 24-Hour Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis and Information Line: 1.888.421.1100
- 24-Hour Statewide Domestic Violence LINK Line: 1.800.897.5465

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+ Mandatory Reporting: Explaining

- Explain to the person about how you will report, to whom, why, and what will happen.
- Offer them the opportunity to be involved in the process.
- Even if mandatory reporting is required, the victim should be aware of the process and who will know their information to greatest extent possible.

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+ What Else Can You Do?

- Have patience with the process.
- Believe the victims! Do not question accuracy.
- Validate the victims' feelings and affirm the courageous act of reaching out to you.
- Tell the victims they are not alone.
- EMPOWER THEM! Let them decide their own healing process while you support them along the way

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+ Thank You!

- For more information, please contact Deborah Dilley at the Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault (801-746-0404), Hilde Koenig at the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (801-521-5544), Camille Coon at the Disability Law Center (801-363-1347) or Marilyn Hammond at the Center for Persons with Disabilities (435-797-3811).
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