

# ABUSE PREVENTION, IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING

**A training for Support Professionals**  
(includes staff, Direct Support People,  
volunteers, and students in a direct  
support role)

## WHY IS ABUSE PREVENTION, IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING IMPORTANT?

- To create awareness that people with disabilities are at a greater risk of abuse and neglect
- To highlight that abuse is often not reported
- To make Support Professionals at Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region (EAFWR) aware that they have an obligation to report abuse
- To encourage Support Professionals to read, understand and follow EAFWR policy and procedures around reporting abuse

## WHY ARE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AT RISK OF ABUSE?

- Negative societal attitudes towards people with disabilities
- Social isolation
- Reliance on others for life necessities, especially for some, intimate personal care
- Reliance on relationships where another person controls the decision-making for them
- In some cases, there is a lack of understanding of their rights, a fear that they will not be believed, an inability to communicate or a fear of complaining

## WHY DO SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS NOT REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE?

- A fear of the possible consequences
- A lack of confidence, a feeling that what they saw might not have been abuse
- A fear of reprisals from co-workers
- A fear of punishment from their employer
- A fear of publicity
- A lack of knowledge of what constitutes abuse

**Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region**  
has a zero-tolerance policy for  
abuse of vulnerable people

## POLICY SPECIFICS

- All EAFWR Support Professionals are required to report if they suspect, receive an allegation about, or witness any form of abuse of an adult with a developmental disability, or any vulnerable person receiving support
- If an EAFWR Support Professional is found guilty of abuse, either by the police or through an internal agency investigation, they may be terminated from employment with EAFWR as per the Standard of Conduct policy, signed during activation or orientation

**Abuse is any action or inaction that jeopardizes a person's health or well-being, or results in significant loss or destruction of their property.**

It includes: physical abuse, neglect, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or financial abuse/exploitation

# WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF ABUSE?

Six types of abuse



# 1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Physical abuse is any act of violence or rough treatment that causes physical injury or fear of physical injury, such as:
  - Slapping, pushing, pulling, kicking, burning
  - Trauma inflicted with an object or weapon
  - Deliberate exposure to severe weather
  - Inappropriate use of a restraint
- Physical abuse is often more terrifying for those who cannot physically flee or escape

## 2. NEGLECT

- Any situation where the basic needs of a person are not being met by themselves or others, such as:
  - Food, water, shelter, heat, clothing, hygiene or safety
  - Proper medical, dental or psychiatric treatment
- Neglect can be the result of action or inaction
- Neglect can be intentional or unintentional

### 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Any act which may lessen the sense of identity, dignity or self worth of a person, such as:
  - Confinement
  - Physical and social isolation
  - Verbal assault, harassment, humiliation or intimidation
  - Denial of information, privacy, visitors or religious worship
  - Coercion
  - Repeated criticism, insults or threats

## 4. SEXUAL ABUSE

- Any act involving unwanted touching/activity of a sexual nature, or a situation in which an adult consents or submits to sexual activity because a person in a position of trust or with authority has used that trust/authority to gain that consent. This includes:
  - Sexual assault
  - Sexual harassment
  - Any act designated to use the vulnerable person for the perpetrator's sexual gratification

## 5. FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Any act that involves the misuse/abuse of funds and/or assets belonging to a vulnerable adult, such as:
  - Obtaining property and funds without the person's knowledge of consent
  - Not acting in the person's best interest, where a person is considered not mentally competent
  - Staff/volunteer borrowing money from someone under their care, making it difficult for the person to say no

## 6. EXPLOITATION

- Any act that takes advantage of a person's disability to trick or manipulate for personal gain, such as:
  - Persuading an individual to do things that are illegal
  - Persuading an individual to do something not in their best interest

**How can abuse be prevented?**

## HOW CAN ABUSE BE PREVENTED?

- The best way to prevent abuse is to make sure that anyone who has a disability:
  - Is involved in the community
  - Has control over their life and makes their own decisions
  - Can do as much on their own as possible
  - Has information about their rights
  - Engages in periodic discussion about appropriate behaviour and abuse



## WHAT ARE SOME GENERAL SIGNS OF ABUSE?

- Recurring physical ailments with no apparent bodily cause
- Eating disorders
- Extreme, unusual behaviour, such as aggression, compliance, depression or withdrawal
- Unusual fear of a particular person or place
- Nightmares and/or sleep disturbances
- Self-destructive behaviour (i.e. drug/alcohol use, self-mutilation or running away)

## WHAT ARE SOME GENERAL SIGNS OF ABUSE? CONT'D

- Lack of attachment to caregivers
- Compulsive lying and/or confusion regarding personal reality
- Regression to infantile behavior

**Each form of abuse has unique symptoms to watch for.**

**These are a number of signs that may indicate a form of maltreatment.**

However, they are not necessarily proof of abuse, but they do warrant further investigation.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT A PERSON IS BEING ABUSED?

1. Intervene to ensure the individual's health and well-being is taken care of whenever possible
2. Provide necessary first aid
3. **Report to your Support Coordinator at 519-741-0190.** Upon receiving the information, your coordinator will help with the appropriate next steps, which may involve contacting the Police or Family and Children's Services. Should the alleged abuser be your Support Coordinator, contact any Director or Manager at EAFWR

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT A PERSON IS BEING ABUSED? CONT'D

4. **Maintain confidentiality.** Do not discuss allegations with the coordinator (beyond the basics of the report), or any other person until you have been interviewed by the police.
5. Provide written documentation of the allegation once the notification has been made.
6. Support the person to talk with their parents or guardians if that is the person's wish. Or, with the consent of the person, the Program Director or Executive Director will contact the parents or guardians as soon as it is practical.

## WHEN RECEIVING ALLEGATIONS ABOUT ABUSE...

- Do not self-investigate. Self-investigating contaminates the evidence
  - Do not ask direct questions such as *Did someone hurt you?*
  - If a report is **unclear**, ask open-ended questions like *When you say 'hurt', what do you mean?* or *Can you tell me more?*
  - Stop all questioning as soon as there is a clear allegation
  - Give the person time. Reassure them you are there to support them
  - Listen
  - Be available

## HOW TO WRITE UP AN INCIDENT

- Your incident report is considered documentation that can be used as evidence in a court of law. When writing your report:
  - Be specific, accurate and clear
  - Be objective
  - Do not use language the person did not use
  - Record any question or action you took
  - Use only blue or black ink
  - Do not use white-out or rewrite the report. If you make an error, put a line through it and rewrite the word. This shows you did not change your statement.
  - Do not include irrelevant information. The report is about the allegation that was made; nothing more.

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

- In an emergency, call 9-1-1
- To report suspected abuse/neglect to the police:
  - Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge: 519-653-7700
  - Other areas of Waterloo Region: 519-570-3000
- To report abuse/neglect after hours, call EAFWR at 519-741-0190
  - The answering machine will give you the appropriate number to call, to reach someone after hours
- To report abuse/neglect of a child, contact the authorities as directed by Child and Family Services Act
- Always call your Support Coordinator at EAFWR at 519-741-0190



# Questions, feedback or concerns about this training?

If you have any questions, feedback or concerns related to the Abuse Prevention, Identification and Reporting training, please contact Cheryl Fuller at [cheryl.fuller@eafwr.on.ca](mailto:cheryl.fuller@eafwr.on.ca) or 519-741-0190 x238