

## **TRAINING MODULE: ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Every patient and resident has the right to receive care in a safe setting. This includes the right to be free from all forms of abuse, neglect, or exploitation whether from staff, other patients or residents, visitors, or other persons.

### **ABUSE**

Includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and is defined as the intentional maltreatment of an individual which may cause physical or psychological injury.

Neglect is the absence of services or resources to meet basic needs. This includes withholding or inadequately providing food and hydration, clothing, medical care, and good hygiene. Exploitation occurs when a patient or resident is taken advantage of to benefit another person.

### **IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT**

Victims of abuse or neglect present to your organization in a variety of ways. The person may be unable or unwilling to speak of the abuse, and it may not be obvious to the casual observer. Therefore staff must identify abuse or neglect, as well as its extent and circumstances, in order to provide appropriate care. Your organization has developed criteria for staff to use to identify and assess victims of abuse and neglect upon entry to the organization and on an ongoing basis.

The patient or resident may also be referred to a community agency for assessment and care. The assessment must be performed in a manner that safeguards evidence and supports future legal actions, if necessary.

### **SIGNS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

The following signs of abuse and neglect do not necessarily signify abuse or neglect but are important to evaluate.

#### **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical abuse involves contact that is intended to cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm and feelings of intimidation. Signs of physical abuse include injuries that are unexplained, questionable, or inconsistent with medical findings such as:

- Facial injuries
- Welts or bite marks
- Burns in the shape of an object
- Fractures or cuts in different stages of healing
- Suspicious patterns of bruising (parallel or circular bruises, bruises in the shape of human fingers or several bruises in different stages of healing)
- Pain during movement or movement that is restricted

The patient or resident may display aggressive and destructive behavior or victimize others. They may also be hurtful to animals and vulnerable individuals and/or take pleasure in being hurt.

#### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Emotional, or psychological, abuse involves verbal or non-verbal conduct that is intended to cause mental or emotional pain. An individual is emotionally abused when he/she is regularly threatened, belittled, harassed, humiliated, ignored, isolated, rejected, blamed or otherwise emotionally mistreated. Signs of emotional abuse include:

- Withdrawn, depressed, or agitated behavior
- Feelings of despair, hopelessness, and vulnerability
- Poor self-image and self-hatred
- Crying without reason
- Overly compliant behavior
- Sleep and/or eating disorders
- Suicidal gestures or attempts
- Loss of interest in activities, including social activities

### **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse, or molestation, involves undesired sexual acts that are forced upon one person by another. Signs of sexual abuse include:

- Trauma to the genital area or complaints of pain around the genitals
- Presence of venereal disease or infection
- Bruises, bleeding, swelling or other discharge from the penis, vagina or anus
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing

The healthcare provider should be aware of any family member, friend, or other person that seems unusually interested in the patient or resident. The patient or resident might display unusual behavior around this person. They may also be seductive toward others, display compulsive sexual or promiscuous behavior, or participate in demeaning or hurtful sexual activities or habits.

### **FINANCIAL ABUSE**

Financial, or economic, abuse involves the use of a person's money, property, or assets without their approval. Signs of financial abuse include:

- Complete control of all finances, including money and credit cards, by another person
- Stealing of money or property
- Misuse of assets for personal gain

### **DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Domestic abuse, or spousal abuse, occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Since domestic abuse may include physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse, the signs provided earlier in this course may be displayed by the patient or resident.

### **NEGLECT**

Neglect is the absence of services or resources that meets a person's basic needs. Signs of neglect include:

- Failure to thrive
- Malnutrition
- Inappropriate dress for weather
- Poor hygiene
- Unattended medical conditions

### **REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

You must immediately report any event or occurrence that may involve or contribute to abuse, neglect, or exploitation so it can be investigated and appropriate actions taken. External agencies must also be notified. Follow your organization's policies and procedures regarding the reporting of abuse.