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# Disability Allies Practicum

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April 11, 2019

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# Preventing Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

**ZERØ**  
**TOLERANCE**

ENDING THE ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND  
EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES

# What is Abuse?

- Abuse causes or is likely to cause physical, emotional, and/or psychological distress or harm to the individual and involves a misuse of power on the part of the caregiver
- Types include physical, verbal, emotional/psychological, and sexual

# Signs of Abuse

- Signs include:
  - Visible signs (bruising, cuts, burns, STDs, rashes, etc.)
  - Behavioral signs (being withdrawn, avoidance, fearfulness, changes in sleeping or eating patterns, risk-taking behavior, comments made, etc.)
  - Sexual abuse (pregnancy, STDS, pain or itch, wetting the bed, inappropriate touching or other behavior, etc.)

# What is Neglect?

- Neglect is a lack of food, shelter, water, interactions, or expected care in ways that are damaging or potentially damaging to an individual's well-being, health, and life
- Forms of neglect include physical, emotional/cognitive, medical, and neglect of supervision

# Signs of Neglect

- Signs include:
  - Filthy, chaotic, and hazardous environment
  - Unclean body or clothes
  - Signs of dehydration or starvation
  - Denying access to relationships or activities
  - Encouraging engagement in illegal behavior
  - Medical issues not addressed
  - Failing to administer medications and/or prepare food as prescribed
  - Accidents or incidents that occur due to lack of supervision (choking, falling, hit by a car, ingesting poison, etc.)

# What is Exploitation?

- Exploitation is the intentional or unintentional misuse of a person's money, goods, or body for the benefit of a caregiver, and involves a misuse of power on the part of the caregiver
- It takes unfair advantage of the individual and may lead to financial, legal, emotional, or other hardship for the individual

# Examples and Signs of Exploitation

- Examples of exploitation include:
  - Financial exploitation: taking a person's prescription medications, letting the individual buy things for you, taking money or items from the person without permission
  - Personal exploitation: making a person do chores/work for your benefit (e.g. cleaning your home, car, etc.)
- Signs include:
  - Missing money or items of value, not being able to pay bills, comments made by the individual, etc.

# What To Do When You See or Suspect Abuse or Neglect

- What steps should you take if you see or suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurring?
  - Stop the event from happening, whenever possible
  - Check the individual involved to see if any help is needed, such as first aid, EMS, emotional comforting
  - Once it is safe, report the incident to the supervisor verbally as soon as it is safe to do so, and follow up with a detailed written report before leaving the shift that day; it should include who, what, when, and where

# Incident Reporting

- The supervisor will share the information within the agency at an administrative/leadership level reporting to the necessary state agencies
- If at any time an employee does not believe the typical incident report system was followed or the employee does not feel comfortable reporting to his/her supervisor, s/he must contact the appropriate state agencies directly:
  - NJ DHS Reporting Hotline - 1-800-832-9173
  - DDD Community Services Office  
<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/staff/cso/index.html>
  - Person's Support Coordinator or DDD Case Manager

# DSP's Role in the Investigation Process

- Once staff see something or hear about something, they must report it immediately to their supervisor verbally and in writing
  - All staff must cooperate in all investigations
  - The incident may be investigated by someone in their own agency, someone from a state office like the Office of Investigation (OI), or both
  - The investigation will be objective

# The Investigation Process

- People may feel more comfortable talking to someone outside the situation, making it easier to find the truth
- The investigation will be done by someone trained in investigating
- It is not the DSP's role to investigate the situation or try to find proof; this could make finding the truth much harder

# Case Study 1



# Case Study 1

- Darryl takes out \$100 from his bank account to buy a new coat. Two staff people take him to the store to buy it. They find a “buy one, get one free” sale.
- One staff person helps Darryl pick out one coat and then picks out the other coat for herself. She states, “If I hadn’t found this sale Darryl would have had to pay full price anyway so I deserve the second coat.” The other staff person nods in agreement.
- When they return to the program they help Darryl put away his new coat and finish their shift as usual.

# Case Study 1 - Questions

- a) Identify the actions that could be considered abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- b) How should you handle the situation?
- c) What could you have done to prevent the situation?

# Case Study 1a - Answers

- Identify the actions that could be considered abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
  - Financial exploitation: The staff person taking the coat, as well as the staff person who did not intervene.
  - Neglect: Failing to intervene or report the situation.

# Case Study 1b - Answers

- How should you handle the situation?
  - The coat needs to be returned and the money returned to Darryl (or a second coat purchased for him).
  - Report needs to be made verbally to the supervisor, DDD, and legal guardian and a written report needs to be done.

# Case Study 1c - Answers

- What could you have done to prevent the situation?
  - The staff person who took the coat should have assisted Darryl in picking out another coat for himself.
  - The staff person who witnessed the situation should have either intervened immediately to stop the theft or reported the situation immediately upon returning to the program.
  - In this case, because the DSP took the coat for herself, it's not just abuse but theft—and that can carry criminal consequences. The theft must still be reported immediately.

# Case Study 2



# Case Study 2

- A staff person answers her personal cellphone as three individuals are getting out of the van. On the way in the staff person walks behind the individuals, talking on the cellphone and making plans.
- Tom, one of the individuals, is a 62 year-old man who requires assistance walking up and down stairs. Tom asks the staff person to help him up the stairs. The staff person replies to Tom, “I’m busy, don’t bother me.”
- While the staff person keeps talking Tom begins to go up the stairs on his own. He falls backwards down the stair striking his head on the ground. He is bleeding from a cut on his head.

# Case Study 2 Questions

- a) Identify the actions that could be considered abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- b) How should you handle the situation?
- c) What could you have done to prevent the situation?

# Case Study 2a - Answers

- Identify the actions that could be considered abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
  - Neglect: Answering a personal call rather than providing service/support.
  - Emotional Abuse: Tom was ignored when he asked for help and he is in an unsafe environment.

# Case Study 2b - Answers

- How should you handle the situation?
  - Call 911, do not move Tom, and do whatever first aid you are trained to do.
  - Once it is safe, make appropriate verbal reports to supervisor, DDD, the Office of the Ombudsman, and any legal guardian and do a written report.
  - Even though it is not Tom's fault he fell, it is a good time to evaluate if this is the best placement for him—perhaps a program with fewer stairs or an elevator could be found for him.

# Case Study 2c - Answers

- What could you have done to prevent the situation?
  - The staff person could have ignored the personal phone call and provided the support necessary.

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**Any Questions**