

## **Definitions of Different Types of Abuse**

1. *The Protection for Persons in Care Act* definition
2. Physical Abuse
3. Emotional/Mental Abuse
4. Financial Abuse
5. Sexual Abuse
6. Neglect

## 1. Definition of Abuse

The general definition of abuse under *The Protection for Persons in Care Act*. (PPCA) states:

In this Act,

**"abuse"** means mistreatment, whether physical, sexual, mental, emotional, financial or a combination of any of them, that is reasonably likely to cause death or that causes or is reasonably likely to cause serious physical or psychological harm to a person, or significant loss to the person's property

The specific definitions and examples of types of abuse have been clarified by the staff of the Protection for Persons in Care Office and are outlined here.

## 2. Physical Abuse

**Physical abuse** is defined as any act of violence or rough treatment of a patient causing injury or physical discomfort. Examples include:

- hitting, pushing, pulling
- injury with any object or weapon
- slapping, kicking, beating
- using unreasonable physical restraint
- deprivation of food or water
- deliberate exposure to extreme weather
- misuse of medications and prescriptions including deliberate withholding of medications or over medicating
- use of chemical restraint or psychotropic medication for any purpose not ordered by the physician

**Physical signs** of physical abuse may include:

- various injuries over a period of time, bruising, broken bones
- injuries that do not match the explanation
- presence of several old or new injuries, different coloured bruising, healing cuts

**Behavioral signs** of physical abuse may include:

- inappropriate fear response
- cringing or flinching if touched unexpectedly
- hiding bruises or injuries or reluctance to change clothing
- depression, anxiety, withdrawal
- sleep disorders

### **3. Emotional Abuse**

**Emotional abuse** is mistreatment that may hurt a person's sense of identity, dignity or self worth. Examples include:

- verbal assaults
- harassment
- threats
- instilling fear
- humiliation
- intimidation
- infantilization (treating adults like small children)
- social isolation
- forcible confinement
- name calling
- denial of information
- denial of privacy
- denial of right to practise own religion
- forbidden contact with family members or friends
- coercion
- compulsion by threat (a psychological, usually irrational force that makes somebody do something unwillingly)

**Physical signs** of emotional abuse may include:

- bedwetting or diarrhea
- frequent psychosomatic complaints of headaches, nausea, abdominal pains

**Behavioral signs** of emotional abuse may include:

- extreme withdrawal
- extreme aggressiveness
- extreme mood swings

#### **4. Financial Abuse**

**Financial abuse** is defined as any act that involves the misuse or abuse of a patient's funds or assets. Such behavior includes obtaining property or without the patient's knowledge or consent; using undue influence; or not acting in the best interests of a patient who is found incompetent. Examples include:

- patients giving away money, property or possessions due threats or coercion
- incompetent patients changing their wills or powers of attorney
- patients' cheques being cashed without authorization
- patients' money being used for purposes other than those intended by the patient

Examples of possible financial abuse include:

- seeing money or property being taken from patients without their permission
- seeing someone forge a patient's signature
- seeing someone using patients' property or possessions without their permission
- hearing someone promising patients lifelong care in exchange for money or property and not following through on the promise
- seeing fraud, trickery, false pretence, or dishonest actions used to trick patients into giving something away
- seeing patients taken in by telemarketing scams

## **5.. Sexual Abuse**

**Sexual abuse** is defined as any act involving unwanted or forcible touching, activity of a sexual nature or a situation in which a patient consents to or submits to sexual activity because a person in a position of trust or authority has used that trust or authority to gain consent or co-operation from a patient. Such behavior can include:

- sexual touching
- sexual harassment
- any act designed to use the patient for the perpetrator's sexual gratification

**Physical signs** of sexual abuse may include:

- pain
- redness
- bruising
- cuts or bleeding in genital area
- bloody or torn clothing
- difficulty walking or sitting
- evidence of sexually transmitted infection

**Psychosocial signs** of sexual abuse may include:

- fear
- withdrawal

The level of competency of the patient must be considered. For example, two competent patients seeking sexual intimacy, such as holding hands or kissing, is not considered sexual abuse unless one of the patients is distressed in any way. There is possible abuse when a competent patient seeks sexual intimacy from an incompetent patient and there is evidence of distress. Each incident requires individual examination. Caregivers must be aware of their own personal biases and attitudes towards senior's sexuality and intimacy.

## 6. Neglect

Neglect as a form of abuse is not quoted in *The Protection for Persons in Care Act*. However, when mistreatment by neglect occurs in a health care facility it can lead to serious physical harm or the potential for it. The Protection for Persons in Care Office staff will identify these incidents as **physical abuse**.

**Intentional or active neglect** is defined as the deliberate withholding of care, or the necessities of life, such as not providing for patients' basic physical needs.

**Unintentional or passive neglect** is defined as a failure to give proper care because of lack of knowledge, experience or ability on the part of caregivers.

Examples of neglect include:

- long-term failure to help patients maintain personal hygiene when they cannot manage it themselves
- failure to provide adequate clothing, or shelter
- failure to provide medical care for physical and mental health needs
- failure to protect patients from health and safety hazards
- failure to provide adequate food and prevent malnutrition
- lack of awareness and/or resources to ensure patients are not mistreated
- failure to follow patients' specific care plans
- failure to use procedures or misusing lifts
- failure to treat recurring bedsores that are preventable