

## Indicators of Abuse

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**Physical assault** (sometimes called physical abuse) includes physical acts that are not accidental that cause pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm (Fitzsimons, 2009, p. 43).

### **Indicators of physical assault (or abuse):**

- Old and new bruises
- Bilateral bruises on upper arms
- Clustered bruises on trunk (i.e., chest, stomach, back)
- Imprint injuries (i.e., marks shaped like fingers, thumbs, hands, belts, sticks, rulers)
- Bite marks
- Bleeding
- Marks left by a gag or some form of restraint
- Broken bones, sprains, fractures, dislocations
- Punctures, cuts, welts
- Eye injuries (e.g., black eye, detached retina)
- Missing teeth
- Internal injuries
- Burns (especially inflicted by cigarettes, matches, ropes, irons)
- Spotty balding from pulling hair
- Unexplained scars or significant scarring
- Untreated injuries

**Neglect** is the failure to fulfill one's responsibility to help; provide reasonable care; fulfill basic physical, medical, and emotional needs; or protect another person (Fitzsimons, 2009, p. 44).

### **Indicators of Neglect:**

#### *Neglect of the Person and Environment*

- Malnutrition (underfeeding, poor quality of food); Dehydration (lack of fluids)
- A smell of urine or feces on the person
- Poor grooming (e.g., overgrown fingernails and toenails; uncut, matted, or unclean hair; unshaven facial hair; body crevices caked with dirt)
- Poor skin condition or skin breakdown (e.g., rash, bedsores, open wounds)
- Infestations (e.g. fleas, lice, roaches, rodents)
- Clutter, filth, bad smell in the home
- Improper sleeping, cooking, or bathing accommodations
- Home in need of repair to maintain health and safety (e.g., broken windows, exposed wiring, leaky roof)
- A lack of heat, plumbing (including running water), electricity, refrigeration, ventilation, or light
- Too many animals or animals lacking care resulting in a health hazard

#### *Lack of Services and Supports*

- Special dietary (food) needs not met
- Failure to provide medication as prescribed
- Medical, dental, nursing, physical therapy or other therapeutic care not provided
- Adaptive aids are not available or properly cared for (e.g., eyeglasses, hearing aids, communication devices, wheelchairs)
- Lack of proper supervision
- A person unable to care for their own self is left unattended for a long period of time
- Inappropriate care providers are used (e.g., too young, impaired by substance abuse)
- Withholding care or delaying care
- A lack of regular and timely help with daily living needs
- Refusing to provide care in the way preferred by the person with a disability

**Financial Exploitation** (sometimes called financial abuse) is the improper or illegal use of another person's money, property, and other assets without informed consent or when consent is obtained by bullying or fraud) (Fitzsimons, 2009, p. 46).

### **Indicators of Financial Exploitation**

- Withholding money
- Taking money without consent or by means of threat
- Hard to believe explanations about how money is managed
- Lack of legal records about who is responsible for managing the person's money and assets
- Lack of documentation about how money is spent or assets invested
- Unexplained disappearance of money or valuable possessions
- Sudden changes or unusual activity in bank account or banking practices
- Basic needs not met when money appears adequate (e.g., clothing, shelter, food, medication)
- Lack of money early in the month when disability or other types of government benefits are paid
- A care provider is getting paid too much or too often
- Making a person ask or beg for their money
- Preventing a person from getting or keeping a job
- Not letting a person know about or have access to their own money or family money

**Sexual assault** (or sexual abuse) is forcing or bullying another person to engage in or observe sexual acts (Fitzsimons, 200, p. 48)

<i>Examples of Hands-off sexual assault</i>	<i>Examples of Hands-on sexual assault</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Exhibitionism (exposing private body parts to others)</li><li>▪ Voyeurism (watching others for sexual pleasure)</li><li>▪ Forcing a person to view pornographic material</li><li>▪ Making demeaning (negative) remarks about a person's body</li><li>▪ Calling a person names (e.g., slut, whore)</li><li>▪ Berating a person about his or her sexual history</li><li>▪ Sexual harassment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Forcing a person to kiss</li><li>▪ Unwanted touching of another person's breasts, genitals, or buttocks</li><li>▪ Forced penetration of a person's vagina</li></ul>

### **Indicators of sexual assault**

- A direct or coded disclosure of sexual abuse
- Torn or missing clothing
- Genital or urinary pain, infection, soreness, or scarring
- Injury to a person's genitals, rectum, mouth, or breasts (e.g., bleeding, bruising, injury, infection, scarring, redness, pain, and irritation). Key red flags are human bite marks, rope marks, and burn marks.
- Signs of forced restraint (e.g., rope marks, finger imprints)
- A person who is not known to be sexually active or unable to consent to sexual relations gets a sexually transmitted disease or becomes pregnant
- Frequent physical illness with no clear cause (e.g., stomachache, sore throat, vomiting)
- Intense fear response to a specific person or to people in general
- Nightmares, night terrors, sleep problems
- Self-destructive behavior or thoughts of suicide

**Psychological abuse** (or emotional abuse) includes acts, physical or verbal, intended to hurt a person's feelings, harm a person emotionally, or to humiliate, demean, intimidate, or produce harm, or threaten harm (Fitzsimons, 2009, p. 54).

### **Indicators of psychological abuse:**

- Calling names, swearing, screaming, making fun of, humiliating, or putting another person down
- Criticizing a person's thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs, actions
- Forcing a person to perform degrading acts or engage in illegal behaviors
- Threatening physical violence; Displaying weapons with the intent to scare
- Threatening to take away or get sole custody of children
- Destroying personal property
- Making a person afraid by using looks, actions, or gestures (e.g., waving a fist in a person's face)
- *Threatening to leave or commit suicide*
- Threatening to have a person institutionalized
- Threatening to harm pets or children
- Threatening to take away adaptive aids