

Abuse and Neglect Discussion Guide

Taking appropriate action when signs of suspected, alleged or witnessed abuse are identified is a critical component of protecting the people we serve.

Every person working or volunteering in an agency providing services and supports to adults with developmental disabilities must have a clear understanding of the agency's policies and procedures on abuse and neglect and most importantly, their obligation to follow them.

Here you will find a series of scenarios and accompanying questions developed to promote discussion and a common understanding within all levels of your organization about:

- ➔ Signs of abuse/neglect
- ➔ Applying judgment about what is considered abuse/neglect
- ➔ The steps to follow (and by whom) when abuse/neglect is suspected, alleged or witnessed, in accordance with your agency's policies and procedures
- ➔ When it is appropriate to report a matter to the police and the importance of not contaminating evidence
- ➔ The potential consequences of inaction

The scenarios are intentionally vague. They will challenge staff to identify and question their own assumptions or expectations of what abuse and neglect looks like. It will also allow exploration of different paths of action and the potential outcomes.

Sample Discussion Questions

Recognizing Abuse/Neglect:

Does this scenario describe alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse or neglect?

- ➔ If yes...why?
- ➔ If no...why?
- ➔ If undecided...what additional information do you need and how could you obtain that information?

Reporting an incident to police:

- ➔ Do you suspect this scenario could constitute a criminal offense?
- ➔ Whose responsibility is it to call the police if you suspect this scenario could constitute a criminal offense?
- ➔ What should you do if you are unsure if this scenario could constitute a criminal offense?

Following Your Policies and Procedures:

What would you do if you were the staff member in this scenario?

- ➔ How would our agency ensure the person experiencing the abuse or neglect is supported by our agency?
- ➔ What is your specific role now, and ongoing?
- ➔ What action would our agency take to address appropriate follow-up with staff who are allegedly involved in a scenario like this?
- ➔ What information would be documented, when and by whom?
Do you need consent to share information with anyone?
- ➔ Do these steps align with our agency's policies and procedures (on abuse/neglect or otherwise)? If not sure, or NO; who can you contact to discuss this or what is the mechanism for feedback in your agency?
- ➔ What should/can I expect of my supervisor/manager/agency administration in terms of the next steps in this scenario?
- ➔ If you are not satisfied with your supervisor's/manager's/agency administration's response, do you know who or how to address your concerns (i.e. Who else to notify, agency complaint process etc.)?

Potential consequences of inaction:

What could be the potential consequences of not taking action in this scenario?

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Joyce

Joyce lives in a supportive group living residence with three other individuals. She is very active in the community and does her own weekly grocery shopping with a staff member. The staff member that accompanies Joyce normally drives her to the grocery store, helps her place items in the cart and pay at the register.

After the most recent shopping trip, other staff members in the house noticed that some of the items on Joyce's receipt couldn't be located and became concerned that a bag was left behind. Joyce assured them that all was okay, she purchased the items on the receipt for the accompanying staff member.

Scenario 2: Adam

Adam is a 24-year-old adult with a developmental disability. He's been living with a Host Family for the last three years and attends day programs throughout the week in the community. Adam is a very fashionable dresser with a big personality and is always singing and loves to mimic staff members' dance moves.

Over the last few weeks, staff have become increasingly concerned by Adam's behavior. He hasn't been singing and dancing and has been withdrawn. Staff also noticed that Adam hasn't been taking the same care in his outfits as before. He has worn the same outfit to his day program three days in a row. In addition, Adam has 'forgotten' his lunch four times in the last few weeks which has never occurred before.

Scenario 3: Tarek

Tarek lives in a supported group living residence with three other members. He has challenging behaviour and can become agitated and violent at times.

During the most recent incident, Tarek became upset while waiting for his parents to arrive for a weekend trip. In the process, Tarek began throwing objects around the house and struck another resident (Lisa) with a ceramic mug. Lisa required five stitches in her leg as a result. The staff applied de-escalation techniques as described in Tarek's behaviour support plan and he eventually apologized to Lisa for hurting her.

Scenario 4: Wilson

Wilson lives in the community with his elderly grandmother who has refused services from a local service agency in the past. Although Wilson does not receive any supports from the agency he is known to staff and members. He has a lot of friends in the program and is often seen spending time around the agency.

Wilson's grandmother recently fell ill, and members of the community have noticed that Wilson has not been around much anymore. One staff member saw Wilson roaming the streets during a snowstorm with sandals on. Agency staff are concerned for his well being since there will be no one to care for him if his grandma passes.

Scenario 5: Wong

Wong lives in a supported group living residence with two other members. She is non-verbal and older than the other residents of the house and requires assistance with day-to-day activities which include eating, personal hygiene, and finances.

One day, as a staff member was helping Wong get dressed she noticed that there was bruising on Wong's arms, legs, and inner thighs. Concerned she may have fallen, the staff member looked to see if there were any documented incident reports from the night staff to explain the injuries but found nothing.

Scenario 6: Marben

Marben lives in the community with his father and his father's girlfriend. Marben attends a day program and his family receives respite services from a local service agency.

At his most recent respite visit, Marben told staff members that his father's girlfriend slapped him after he spilled soda on the carpet. He assured staff that he is no longer angry because she promised to take him to the movies. He also asked that the staff member not tell anyone because he doesn't want to get her into trouble.

Scenario 7: Benson

Benson lives in the community with his mother and father and attends a day program at a local agency.

Today Benson complained to a staff member at the day program that a volunteer (Gabe) had shoved him and his friend in the hallway to hurry them along to lunch. He showed the staff member a bruise on his right arm. Benson has made similar allegations against staff members in the past that were found to be unsubstantiated by police and the agency.

Scenario 8: Liam

Diane and Jacob support Liam in a supported group living residence. Liam is mild mannered and extremely active in the community.

One evening Liam was upset with Jacob because his clothing was not washed in time for his evening outing. Diane overheard Liam and Jacob speaking to one another in harsh tones. She also thinks she heard Jacob call Liam "retarded" during their confrontation. Diane isn't 100% sure about what transpired and knows that Jacob is an excellent support worker and an even better friend.

Scenario 9: Dwight

Robert is the supervisor at a local service agency. He manages 17 staff support workers in four homes.

Recently a staff member, William, came to him in confidence to talk about something that happened on one of his shifts a month earlier. William told him that another staff member, Krissy, got caught up in a verbal confrontation with Dwight, an individual receiving supports. During the confrontation, William overheard Krissy call Dwight, a "mongoloid". William also said it was uncharacteristic of Krissy and that he had never witnessed her do anything like this before.

Scenario 10: Simone

Carmen is a supports supervisor at a local service agency. Her role is to coordinate supports in the community for individuals with developmental disabilities. Simone is a young woman with a developmental disability that lives with her mother and brother. The agency works with Simone's family to provide five hours of in-home support a week.

While working on the most recent schedule, three of Carmen's staff requested that they not be scheduled at Simone's home moving forward. Staff noted that the house was dirty and infested with bed bugs and that Simone's mother refused to clean anything. Carmen has had challenges in the past with one of the three staff who has exaggerated the conditions of a home to avoid having to travel, what they thought was a long distance. She suspects this may be the case this time as well. Carmen was able to find another staff member willing to work the shift.

Scenario 11: Dante

Dante lives in a supported group living residence. He comes from a home and family where there was a history of neglect, which led to his removal from his parent's care in 2015. Both Dante's mother and father suffer from substance related issues and they have not contacted Dante or maintained a relationship with him since his relocation.

Dante has been living within a supported group living residence for the last three years. Recently Dante's family came to the agency and requested Dante start visiting their home again. Staff members are concerned for Dante who is excited to have his parents back in his life.

Scenario 12: Corey

Corey attends a community participation (CP) program and resides with his family. He is an active member of the community and volunteers at the library three times a week.

Recently he told other members of the CP program that he has a new boyfriend. While sharing this exciting news with other members, it came to light that Corey (21) is significantly younger than his new boyfriend (52). They had been speaking online for a few days before their initial meeting. Staff members are concerned that Corey might be putting himself in a compromising situation but also want to respect his personal life decisions.

Scenario 13: Jane

Jane is a 19-year-old adult with developmental disabilities and lives in a supported group living residence. At her parents' request, the service agency has arranged for Jane to attend a day program outside of the agency. Jane has been attending this day program for over a year and has only missed a handful of days, once due to illness and once for a family vacation.

Recently, Jane has avoided attending the day program. One morning, as staff were helping to get Jane ready, she stated that she didn't want to go if Nathan, the new facilitator, was there. She told the staff that Nathan makes her feel uncomfortable, but she didn't want to elaborate.

Scenario 14: Sarah

Sarah has a supported independent living arrangement in the city. She receives approximately 10 hours of weekly support at her apartment. She is active in the community, outgoing and has had healthy relationships in the past.

About a month ago, Sarah mentioned that she had a new boyfriend who also lives in the city and that he is 'really rich'. She has shown staff gifts that her boyfriend has given her, including new clothing and a new cell phone. Staff have recently noticed a change in the way that Sarah dresses and that she has gotten a tattoo of her boyfriend's name. Sarah has now told staff that her boyfriend is going to help her during the week and that she no longer wants or needs any agency support.

Scenario 15: Janice

Janice lives in the community with her elderly mother, Mary. Mary uses a local service agency to help manage Janice's Passport funds, including payment to a private sector service provider that operates the day program that Janice attends. Mary also uses a self-employed worker to transport Janice daily to and from the private day program.

Janice is normally a very calm, quiet and reserved person. However, the self-employed worker informed her contact at the local service agency that Janice has recently been very agitated and anxious when she was dropped off each morning at the day program.

Scenario 16: Chris

Chris is a young adult with an intellectual disability. He has been living with a Host Family for three years and has hired his host 'brother' and 'sister' as independent support workers. Chris is a very well-spoken and appears to be a capable young man. He aspires to live in his own apartment and use his support funds to help achieve this goal.

Over the course of several months, Chris' 'brother' and 'sister' have submitted several support invoices which indicate they were both supporting Chris at the same time, but at different places, doing different activities. When asked about this, Chris' host family explain that incorrect dates were noted on the invoices, and they were paid.

A few weeks later, while discussing plans for his future, Chris mentions he would like to move out on his own soon. However, he says his host family makes statements undermining his independence, such as "Chris doesn't know how to cook for himself", "Chris has no awareness of personal safety" and "Chris can't do his own laundry".

Over the next few months, more duplicate invoices come in. When asked about his supports, Chris confirms that his 'brother' and 'sister' did not support him on any of the days that are listed.