
ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING: TEACHING PLAN

Lesson overview

Time: One hour

This lesson is required by many state regulatory agencies on an annual basis for staff in facilities that care for the elderly. It covers the prevention, recognition, and reporting of elder abuse and neglect.

Learning goals

At the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

1. Define different kinds of abuse and neglect.
2. Identify symptoms of caregiver stress that could lead to abuse or neglect.
3. List ways to prevent abuse and neglect.
4. Recognize signs of abuse and neglect.
5. Know how to report elder abuse and neglect.

Teaching plan

Give each learner a copy of the corresponding Learning Guide. For self-study, the learner may read this Teaching Plan and the Learning Guide and take the test.

Types of abuse

Introduce the lesson to your learners by asking them to do the “Ways Elders are Abused” Matching Activity on the Learner Guide, either individually or as a group.

Answers: 1.d; 2.c; 3.b; 4.e; 5.a; 6.f. Ask if anyone can add anything to “Other Ways Elders Are Abused.”

Who are the victims?

State that the typical abuse victim lives with and depends on a family member for daily care, but abuse is also a problem in institutional settings. Most victims are female, age 75 or over, with a mental or physical illness. Most are completely dependent on the abuser.

Who are the abusers?

State that most abusers are relatives who take care of the elderly person. The abusers may have problems such as alcohol or drug dependence, emotional or mental illness, or stress. Many times the abusers need as much help as the victim.

Caregiver stress

Explain that caregiver stress can be a problem for anyone caring for the elderly, and that this can lead to abuse. Instruct the learners to fill out the questionnaire “Are You an Overly Stressed Caregiver?” Ask for discussion. Point out that this questionnaire could be used for family caregivers as well.

Preventing abuse and neglect

Point out the ideas for preventing abuse at the bottom of the Learner Guide’s first page. State:

1. Professional caregivers have valuable skills about ways to care for the elderly. *Work is less stressful when we know how to do it well.* We can also teach these skills to family members.
2. We can help each other by listening while we vent frustrations and by working together to solve problems. We can help family members by listening to their frustrations.
3. We must observe the elderly person’s rights at all times, and teach them to others.

Recognizing abuse and neglect

Review the signs of abuse and neglect, and point out that some of these could happen even in a facility that cares for the elderly. Everyone should be alert to the signs.

Ask volunteers to read the case studies to the group. Call for answers and discussion.

Answers: 1. verbal; 2. rights violation; try putting the mattress on the floor; 3. physical; document and report the bruises to supervisor, supervise visits between Mrs. Johnson and her son, and supervisor report possible abuse to authorities.

Reporting abuse and neglect

Explain your agency’s and your state’s reporting procedures, giving the appropriate regulatory agency’s name and number to the learners.

Give learners a copy of the statement of resident or elder rights for your state.

Test answers: 1.c; 2.a, b, c; 3.b; 4.c; 5.a,b; 6.b,c; 7.a,c; 8.(#); 9.b; 10. Respect.

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING: LEARNING GUIDE

Elder abuse: Any mistreatment or neglect of an elderly person. *Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.*

Ways elders are abused

Match the Definition to the Term:

1. _____ Psychological abuse
 2. _____ Neglect
 3. _____ Physical abuse
 4. _____ Rights violations
 5. _____ Financial abuse
 6. _____ Sexual abuse
- a. Stealing or mismanaging the money, property, or belongings of an older person. Also called *exploitation*.
 - b. Using physical force to cause physical pain or injury.
 - c. Failing to provide something necessary for health and safety, such as personal care, food, shelter, or medicine.
 - d. Causing emotional or psychological pain. Includes isolation, verbal abuse, threats, and humiliation.
 - e. Confining someone against his will, or strictly controlling the elder's behavior. Includes improper use of restraints and medications to control difficult behaviors.
 - f. Forcing sexual contact without the elder person's consent, including touching or sexual talk.

Other Ways Elders Are Abused:

Overmedicating
Denying aids such as walkers, eyeglasses, or dentures
Dirty living conditions
Inadequate heating and air conditioning

There is no acceptable excuse for abuse and neglect of the elderly, but recognizing and preventing the problem of caregiver stress may help prevent some elder abuse.

Are you an overly stressed caregiver?

Answer these questions "yes" or "no."

1. I am frequently unable to sleep because I have so much on my mind. _____
2. Most of the time I don't feel very good. _____
3. I have difficulty concentrating, and often forget to do routine tasks. _____
4. I feel depressed or sad much of the time. _____
5. I feel worried and anxious almost all the time. _____
6. I lose my temper easily and become angry at other people. _____
7. I don't think there's anything wrong with me; I just wish everyone else would stop doing things that upset me. _____
8. Most days I feel irritable and moody, often snapping at others. _____
9. I feel tired almost all the time, and just drag myself through my days. _____
10. I'm too busy to do anything fun or to go out with my friends. _____

Any "yes" answers could be a sign of excessive stress. More than three "yes" answers should prompt you to talk to your supervisor or physician about the way you are feeling.

Caregivers who are feeling too much stress are more likely to be abusive or neglectful of the people in their care. To be a good caregiver, you must care for yourself as well as others.

Prevent Abuse by:

Support Groups

Communication

Counseling

Teach Caregiving Skills

Listening

Education

Signs of elder abuse and neglect

Be concerned if you see an elderly person showing these new behaviors or signs:

Personality and behavior changes:

1. Becoming withdrawn, unusually quiet, depressed, or shy.
2. Becoming anxious, worried, easily upset.
3. Refusing care from caregivers.
4. Not wanting to be around people, not wanting to see visitors.

Physical signs:

1. Bruises or burns
2. In a woman, vaginal bleeding or bruising of the genitals or thighs
3. Fractures
4. Unreasonable or inconsistent explanations for injuries
5. Frequent emergency room visits

Signs of possible neglect:

1. Weight loss, malnutrition, or dehydration
2. Insufficient clothing, shoes, or basic hygiene items
3. Medications not filled or taken
4. Doctor visits not scheduled or kept
5. Unclean appearance or smell
6. Skin ulcers or sores
7. Declining health

While most of these things are controlled in an institution, it is possible for any of them to occur anywhere. Abusive or neglectful caregivers can be professionals as well as family members. It is important for everyone to be alert to the signs.

Case studies

What kind of abuse or neglect is happening in these stories?

1. Mr. Allen appears in the kitchen in only his underwear. He is yelling that someone has stolen his clothes. An attendant tries to steer him back to his room, but he refuses to go. The attendant says, "Mr. Allen, if you don't get dressed we're going to lock you in your room."

A threat is a type of _____ abuse.

2. Mrs. Maguire falls out of bed almost every night. She can't manage to raise and lower bed rails without assistance, and she can't remember to use her call light. The agency decides to use bed rails anyway so she won't fall out. Mrs. Maguire is forced to stay in her bed all night and can't get up to the bathroom unless someone comes and helps her.

Forced confinement is a type of _____

What is a better solution to this problem?

3. Mrs. Johnson receives infrequent visits from her son, but every time he comes, you notice fresh bruises on her arms within a day of his visit. Mrs. Johnson insists they are nothing. This might be _____ abuse. What should be done?

REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Anyone who knows of an elderly person being abused or neglected is obligated to notify the proper authorities. Reporting procedures vary by state. ***Any aide who suspects abuse of a resident by either a family member or another professional caregiver should first report it to his or her supervisor.*** You should become familiar with any statements of rights that your state has issued to protect the elderly and residents of care facilities—ask your supervisor for a copy.

Every state has an office or department that deals with abuse and neglect of the elderly. There are different names for these offices: Human Services, Adult Protective Services, Health and Welfare, Department of Aging, etc. Write the name and number of your state agency here:

This is the place to call when you know of, or suspect, elder abuse or neglect.