



Addressing Abuse Against Residents

Abuse in long-term care facilities can take many forms – physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, financial exploitation, and neglect. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA), close to five million older adults are mistreated each year, and that number is rising. Residents of long-term care facilities are at an increased risk of abuse due to living with characteristics that are associated with elder abuse, including chronic medical and/or mental health conditions, cognitive impairment, dependence on others, and social isolation.

Signs of Abuse

- Unexplained bruising, injuries, or pain
- Unexplained genital bleeding or infection
- Fear, nervousness
- Being extremely withdrawn or non-communicative
- Observing or learning that staff disregard residents or their rights
- Observing or learning that residents' requests for help are ignored
- Unmet care needs, dehydration, malnutrition, or untreated bed sores
- Residents relaying that they are missing money or access to their funds



Reporting Suspected Abuse

If you suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation it is important to report the suspicions to the appropriate authorities. Know and follow your agency's or station's guidelines for reporting suspected abuse to your supervisor. The Resources provided at the end of this brief list links to the agencies, click the link and search your state for the appropriate agency contact information. Agencies that have a responsibility to investigate reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation occurring in long-term care facilities (LTCF) are:

- **Licensing and Certification of LTCFs:** This agency is most often a part of the state's larger department of health. They have a responsibility to investigate reports of abuse and if there is a finding of abuse the agency may fine, suspend, or terminate the provider's license and/or Medicare/Medicaid certification.
- **Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP):** LTCOP representatives will investigate reported abuse for the purpose of acting as the resident's advocate if requested by the resident or their designated family member to do so.
- **Adult Protective Services:** Every state has an Adult Protective Services (APS) program but not every APS program has a responsibility to investigate reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation in LTCFs. Check with your state APS program to see if APS has jurisdiction in long-term care facilities in your state.
- **State Attorney General Office:** For reports of widespread, systematic abuse, neglect, or exploitation contact your state's Attorney General's office.

Tips

- Even if a resident appears confused, if they tell you about an incident, event, or perpetrator, listen closely. Document the conversation and report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Consider re-asking questions of the resident while in the ambulance that you asked in their room. They may be more willing to talk when away from people in the LTCF.
- If you believe there is widespread abuse, neglect, or exploitation in a LTCF, review your agency's data/reports for prior incidents. Include relevant facts in the report with appropriate authorities.
- If your intuition tells you that something is not right, follow your conscience and file reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- If EMS needs law enforcement to respond to a situation, they can contact their own dispatch by radio or onboard systems, and dispatch will coordinate directly with the police. Some EMS agencies also use direct phone numbers or priority lines to request law enforcement without calling 911.



RESOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/elder-abuse/about/index.html

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:

cms.gov/medicare/health-safety-standards/certification-compliance/nursing-homes

U.S. Department of Justice: justice.gov/elderjustice/red-flags-elder-abuse

The National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center: lombudsman.org/about

National Adult Protective Services Association: napsa-now.org/help-in-your-area

National Association of Attorneys General: naag.org/find-my-ag

National Center on Elder Abuse: ncea.usc.edu/identify-abuse

Scan the QR code to watch the accompanying video.



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