

	Section: 17 Quality and Risk Management	Pages: 4	Procedure Number: 17-4-1
	Subject: Identification and Reporting of Elder Abuse		

PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE:

To provide Banyan employees with guidelines on how to identify and report abuse of older adults in a way that respects the autonomy and self-determination of the older adult.

A. DEFINITIONS:

- Elder Abuse:** An act or admission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. It is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to the older person (World Health Organization).

B. PROCEDURES:

1. Main Causes of Elder Abuse

- 1.1 Interpersonal Power and Control** - Elder abuse often occurs because of the abuser’s power and control over an older person. The abuser may try to keep control over the victim by using threats, intimidation or coercion.
- 1.2 Isolation** - Isolation is one way the abuser controls the victim and helps ensure the abuse is kept hidden.
- 1.3 Dependency** - The abuser is often dependent upon the abused for financial support and sometimes emotional support. The victim may also be dependent upon the abuser for physical care and activities of daily living.

2. Who is at Risk of Abuse?

- 2.1. Abuse can happen at any age to any person but the following factors can increase the risk of abuse:**
 - Isolation is often a factor and as the abuse escalates the isolation becomes deeper and more profound
 - Lack of social support
 - Low self-esteem
 - Self-neglect
 - A history of family violence
 - Caregiver stress
 - Caregiver risk of depression
 - Absence of adequate support or relief for the caregiver
 - Shared living arrangements—for example, when an older adult lives with a caregiver or a friend

- Addictions, such as drugs, alcohol, or gambling – involving the abused or the abuser
- Dependency on the older adult for shelter or financial help
- Depression and other mental health issues – in the abused or the abuser
- Cognitive impairment—confusion, memory loss, or dementia – in the abused or the abuser

3. Who are the Abusers?

3.1. Elder abuse can be caused by family members, staff or any individual in a position of trust or authority. Abuse can also be resident-to-resident or client-to-client abuse.

4. Indicators of Abuse

4.1. The following are possible indicators that abuse and/or neglect is happening:

- Physical injuries – bruises, sprains, broken bones or scratches – especially when the explanation does not fit the injury.
- The client becomes anxious or withdrawn, or stops visiting with friends, or changes in regular social activity such as missing religious or social events.
- Changes in living arrangements, such as previously uninvolved relatives or new friends moving in.
- Changes in financial situations such as cancellation of services (TV, internet, phone) or notices of unpaid bills.
- Unusual banking withdrawals.
- Things ‘disappearing’ from the house.
- Signs of neglect, such as no food in the house, being left alone for long periods or not having glasses, hearing aids, medications or proper clothing.
- A client being treated like a child or being controlled by another adult.
- A depended client being left alone for long periods of time.

5. Role of Employees

5.1 Working with clients closely in their home environment allows Banyan employees the opportunity to recognize if abuse is taking place and to develop a relationship and a sense of trust with the client/resident which may help the person disclose abuse.

5.2 If a Banyan employee does have a suspicion that makes him or her feel uncomfortable or if they are concerned that something is not right or has an awkward feeling then the employee should trust their instincts. Remember elder abuse is hidden crime and is often difficult to detect but the following two questions can help you recognize indicators of abuse:

- Why is this situation causing me concern?
- What am I observing?

6. Steps to Take if You Have Concerns

6.1 Employees should not jump to conclusions. A warning sign does not automatically mean that abuse is happening. Before you take any action, stop and ask:

- What are the safety issues?

- Am I being respectful to the older adult?
- 6.2 Your next step will depend on the situation - please refer to **Appendix 1- Decision Tree**.
- 6.3 If the situation is dangerous employees should not hesitate but call 911 immediately- trust your instincts. It is always better to be safe than sorry. Be supportive and listen. Let them know that whatever is happening is not their fault. If 911 has been called please inform program supervisor immediately and complete **17-1F Incident Report**.
- 6.4 If the situation is not dangerous advise the program supervisor immediately about your concern. If it is safe, the supervisor is to talk to the person. Remember these tips:
- Use the 3A's in your interaction with the senior:
 - o Active listening and reassurance
 - o Ask the older person what he or she wants
 - o Action according to wishes and follow-up
 - Wait for a time when you are alone and not likely to be interrupted.
 - Describe what you saw and heard. Stick to the facts.
 - Ask caring questions. Are you okay? Is someone hurting you? What do you want to do? How can I help?
 - Be supportive and listen. Let them know that whatever is happening is not their fault.
 - Self-determination – Respect the right of seniors to manage their affairs and take part as fully as possible in decisions affecting their health and security. Respect their decisions, even when you don't agree.
 - Be patient. Leave the door open for the client to approach you at a later date to talk. If you are uncertain about what to do, check with the **SENIORS SAFETY LINE 1-866-299-1011**, or with local professionals, for example Catholic Family Service and/or Hamilton Police Services Senior Support Officers. They may be able to point you to resources in the community, and may advise you about safety planning.

C. REFERENCE SOURCES:

- Elder Abuse Ontario @ <http://www.elderabuseontario.com>

D. CROSS REFERENCES:

- 17-4 Zero Tolerance of Abuse (Clients)
- 17-2 Incident Reporting & Investigation
- 17-1F Incident Report
- Appendix 1- Decision Tree

E. REVIEW CYCLE: This procedure is to be reviewed at the same time as 17-4 Zero Tolerance of Abuse.

Approved By:	Director (Quality & Risk)
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Appendix 1

Decision Tree When You See or Suspect Abuse

