



Elder Abuse Policy and Procedure

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline the requirements for prevention, identification and responding to elder abuse at Walka Grange Lifestyle Village.

Statement

Walka Grange Lifestyle Village does not condone the abuse of any person under any circumstances and is committed to ensuring safeguards are in place to prevent elder abuse, identify actual or suspected elder abuse and take appropriate action to respond to elder abuse.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all employees working at Walka Grange Lifestyle Village.

Definitions

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person (World Health Organisation).

Types and Signs of Elder Abuse

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is the illegal or improper use of an older person's assets. Assets can include property and finances.

For example, threatening, coercing or influencing a person to change their will or sign documents relating to their assets, abusing Powers of Attorney by taking money or property and stealing goods, money or belongings without the person's permission.

This includes misuse of a power of attorney, forcing or coercing an older person to change their will, sign documents, taking control of a person's finances against their wishes and denying them access to their own money, stealing goods and money.

Indicators of financial abuse may include:

- Unauthorised use of banking and financial documents
- Significant bank withdrawals
- Recent addition of a signature on a bank account
- Inability of a person to access bank accounts or statements

- Stockpiling of unpaid bills
- Insufficient food in the fridge
- No money to pay for essentials for the home including food, clothing or utilities
- Unexplained disappearance of belongings
- Changes to wills
- Carer making excuses for not providing receipts for purchases
- Cancelling or refusing community services

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves the infliction of physical pain or injury, or physical coercion.

For example, pushing, shoving, rough handling, kicking, hitting, restraining physically, locking a person in a room or home and overuse or misuse of medications.

Indicators of physical abuse may include:

- Sprains
- Dislocations
- Fractures
- Pressure sores
- Unexplained bruising or marks on the body
- Broken or healing bones
- Lacerations
- Missing teeth
- Eye injuries
- Abrasions
- Scratches
- Choke marks
- Burns
- Hair loss
- Discrepancies between an injury and the explanation of how it happened

Psychological Abuse (including social isolation)

Psychological abuse is the infliction of mental stress involving actions and threats such as verbal abuse, threats, bullying, intimidation and harassment, social isolation, fear of violence, deprivation and feelings of shame and powerlessness.

Examples include treating an older person as if they are a child, engaging in emotional blackmail and preventing contact with family and friends and/or access to services and community activities, religious (spiritual) and cultural events.

Indicators of psychological abuse may include:

- Feelings of helplessness, shame and powerlessness
- Changes in levels of self-esteem
- Sadness or grief at the loss of important relationships
- Depression, withdrawal or listlessness due to a lack of social interaction
- Demoralisation
- Tearfulness
- Worry or anxiety after a visit by a specific person
- Confusion, agitation and social withdrawal
- Unexplained paranoia
- Unusual passivity or anger

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a broad term used to describe a range of sexual acts where the victim's consent has not been obtained or where consent was obtained through coercion

Examples include non-consensual sexual assault, inappropriate sexual handling or touching, exposure to pornography against their will, forced nudity and cleaning or treating the older person's genital area roughly or inappropriately.

Indicators of sexual abuse (excluding body areas) may include:

- Unexplained STD or incontinence
- Injury or trauma to face, neck, chest, abdomen, thighs or buttocks
- Trauma including bleeding around the genitals, chest, rectum or mouth
- Torn or bloody underclothing or bedding
- Human bite marks
- Difficulty walking, sitting or pain when toileting
- Anxiety around the perpetrator
- Fear of being touched
- Other psychological symptoms

Neglect

Neglect is a term used to describe the failure of a carer or responsible person to provide the necessities of life to an older person.

For example, failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care and preventing the person from accessing services.

Indicators of neglect may include:

- Inadequate clothing

- Complaints of being too cold or too hot
- Poor personal hygiene and/or unkempt appearance
- Lack of medical or dental care
- Injuries that have not been properly cared for
- Absence of required assistive technologies
- Exposure to unhealthy or unsanitary conditions
- Unexplained weight loss; dehydration and malnutrition
- Poor skin integrity
- An overly attentive carer in the company of others

Prevention of Elder Abuse

The Village Manager will:

- a) Provide residents with information
- b) Display this Elder Abuse Policy and Procedure on the Resident's Noticeboard located in the Clubhouse building to provide information on local services and support agencies and guidance on how to access the services and resources.
- c) Ensure all village staff attend elder abuse training on commencement of employment and employees are familiar with the common forms of abuse, ways to respond, how to raise concerns.

Identifying and Responding to Elder Abuse

Village staff will be alert for signs of elder abuse and follow the steps below where actual or suspected elder abuse is identified.

Village Staff

1. Ask the Resident questions and gather some preliminary information
2. Assess immediate safety – where there is immediate risk to the Resident or themselves call emergency services
3. Where there is no immediate risk to the Resident or themselves provide support to the resident and report the allegation to the Village Manager

Village Manager

1. Visit the Resident and gather additional information
2. Consider contacting the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline on 1800 628 221 for information, support and referral options if needed
3. Document the allegation on a Resident Incident form and keep a copy on the Resident's file
4. Notify the Village Operator

Village Operator

1. Consider the information provided
2. Contact the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline on 1800 628 221 for information, support and referral options if needed

Village Manager

If elder abuse is likely:

- Ask the Resident what they want to do about their situation
- If the Resident lacks capacity, include the nominated relative/friend contact (if this person is not the abuser) in the conversation
- Discuss referral options
- Seek consent from the Resident to make referral(s)
- Make appropriate referrals
- Leave information (if safe to do so) if the Resident declines assistance and keep the lines of communication open
- Consider implementing any local protocols and service coordinating plans
- Monitor and follow-up as required

Case Scenario

A husband has no understanding about his wife who lives in the village and who is living with dementia.

The husband yells at the wife to stop being so stupid (emotional/psychological abuse) and expects the wife to provide daily living requirements such as meals, laundry, cleaning, shopping which is the lifelong expectation of the husband. The husband becomes increasingly embarrassed about his wife's behaviour and isolates her, restricting enjoyment of friends and family (psychological abuse). The husband starts slapping her to force her to walk and behave in a particular way (physical abuse).

What can staff and management do?

- 1. Call 000 without delay, and depending on the circumstances:**
 - Contact other emergency services and arrange medical treatment.
 - Arrange emergency accommodation.
 - Follow any advice provided by the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline
 - Other support sensitive to culture, sexual identity and religious beliefs.
- 2. What if I am unsure about whether it is an emergency?**
 - An emergency is when there is an immediate threat or risk of physical harm or serious damage to property.
 - The threat or risk may be suspected or actual. If you are unsure, it is safest to treat it as an emergency.

3. What can the police do?

The NSW Police respond to emergencies and have powers under NSW Crime Acts. Some forms of elder abuse are crimes. Police can:

- Conduct a welfare check.
- Investigate a report that is made which may lead to criminal charges.
- Under some circumstances, gain access and entry to the premises.
- Apply on the person's behalf for an Apprehended Domestic or Personal Violence Order which can include an Exclusion Order.
- Ring an ambulance or mental health team and make referrals.

4. What if the older person does not want help?

Older people should be involved in making decisions about their life as much as possible, including in an emergency. However, if a staff member decides a person is in imminent danger, they must act, even if this goes against the person's wishes. This relates to 'duty of care' to avoid further harm.

5. Making a report to the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline

Anyone who believes that an older person or adult with a disability is subject to, or at risk of, abuse, neglect or exploitation can make a report to the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline.

- Reporters can be anonymous.
- Reporters have protections under the law.
- Reports can be made to our Helpline: by phone, email or online.

6. Emergency and Useful Contacts

Police/Ambulance	000
NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline	1800 628 221
NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Email	helpline@adc.nsw.gov.au
NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Web Site	www.adc.nsw.gov.au
Domestic Violence Helpline	1800 737 732
Seniors Rights Service	1800 424 079
NSW Trustee & Guardian	1300 364 103
Translating & Interpreter Services	131 450

Related Documents/Forms

- Keeping Residents Safe from Abuse – NSW Ageing and Disability Commission Publication May 2023
- Resident Incident Form

Related Legislation

- Retirement Villages Act 1999 (NSW)
- Retirement Villages Regulation 2017 (NSW) – Schedule 3A, Clause 10
- NSW Retirement Villages Amendment (Rules of Conduct for Operators) Regulation 2019 – Schedule 3A, Part 2 (10)

Authority

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Approval: Chris Unicomb, Village Operator
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