

Abuse of Older People Policy

1 PREAMBLE

- 1.1 This policy has been developed to assist Teman staff to identify older people who may be at risk of abuse or people who may abuse.
- 1.2 Broadly defined, older abuse or elder abuse covers any behaviour by a person or persons which results in harm to an older person. (McCallum et al 1990; Office of the Commissioner for Ageing 1992; Office of the Ageing 1994).
- 1.3 Older people are abused when they are victims of any pattern of behaviour, which causes any combination of the following:
 - Physical abuse
 - Financial abuse
 - Psychological abuse
 - Neglect
 - Sexual abuse
 - Domestic violence (DV)

2 POLICY

- 2.1 The management and staff of TEMAN will be vigilant in their efforts to protect the elderly in their care from any form of abuse. This will include the timely identification, investigation and actions to respond to risks and allegations of abuse.

3 PROCEDURE

3.1 Definitions

3.1.1 Physical Abuse – is the inflicting of physical pain or injury, or physical coercion. Physical abuse includes:

- punching, kicking, biting, beating, scratching
- burning
- pushing
- dragging

- shaking
- sexual
- assault
- rough handling
- physical restraint such as being tied to a bed or chair; or being locked in a room or a house except where physical restraint consent has been granted by a guardian, or the person themselves consents for safety reasons and
- any other physical harm to an older person.

Possible indicators:

- A history of unexplained accidents or injuries, or conflicting stories from the older person and carer
- Implements such as walking sticks, belts and ropes
- Bruising, skin tears or abrasions on the face, neck, forearms, trunk and legs;

3.1.2 Financial Abuse –is the illegal or improper use of a person's finances or property by another person with whom they have a relationship implying trust (Elder Abuse Prevention Unit).

Examples include:

- misappropriation of money, valuables or property
- exerting undue influence to give away assets or gifts
- misuse of powers of attorney
- putting undue pressure on the older person to accept lower-cost or lower-quality services in order to preserve more financial resources to be passed to beneficiaries on death
- forging or forcing an older person's signature
- forced or coerced changes to a will or other legal documents; and denial of the right of access to, or control over, personal finances
- Carrying out unnecessary work or overcharging for a service
- Denial to access funds
- Failure to repay loans
- Living with the older person and refusing to contribute money for expenses
- Promising long-term care in exchange for money or property and then not providing the promised care
- Getting an older person to sign a will, contract or power of attorney through deception, coercion or undue influence
- Abusing joint signatory authority on a blank form
- Getting an older person to be a guarantor for a loan where the benefit of the loan is for someone else without sufficient information or knowledge to make an informed decision

Possible indicators:

- Items of furniture, jewellery, paintings or silverware may go missing
- Money, bank books, credit cards or cheque books may be "lost"
- Carer/family member is observed to bully or coerce the older person into purchasing goods or giving money which directly benefits the carer or family member
- Older person begins to behave uncharacteristically with his or her money

- The older person is coerced into changing a will or issuing a Power of Attorney.

3.1.3 Psychological Abuse – is the infliction of mental anguish involving actions that cause fear of violence, isolation or deprivation and/or feelings of shame, loss of dignity and/or powerlessness.

Examples include:

- treating the older person as a child
- humiliation
- emotional blackmail
- blaming
- Swearing
- intimidation
- name calling isolation from friends and relatives and
- emotional isolation by the withdrawal of affection.

Possible indicators:

- Many symptoms of psychological abuse appear similar to psychiatric illnesses and such abuse may be easily misdiagnosed as depression or paranoia
- The older person may be fearful of the abuser
- The older person may show signs of depression, eg hopelessness, passivity, apathy, resignation or withdrawal
- Sensory and social deprivation.
- The older person may be hostile or dismissive of the person

3.1.4 Neglect – is a form of abuse where an older person is deprived of the necessities of life by a care giver; the failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical/dental care or access to health professionals or other services.

Examples include:

- abandonment
- failure to provide food
- clothing or shelter
- inappropriate use of medication (including over-medication) and
- poor hygiene or personal care.

Possible indicators:

- Abandonment
- Malnourishment
- Weight loss, wasting, dehydration or severe constipation where no other cause is apparent
- Medication may be used inadequately or inappropriately, eg to over sedate the older person; and the possible withholding of medical care
- Poor hygiene, dirty clothes and inadequate skin care of pressure areas, inappropriate clothes for the season.

3.1.5 Sexual Abuse – can be displayed a sexually abusive and exploitative behaviour ranging from verbal and sexual innuendos to rape, indecent assault and sexual harassment.

Possible indicators:

- Bruising, bleeding and pain around the genital areas
- Possible torn, stained or blood-stained underwear
- Possible difficulty in walking or sitting.

3.1.6 Domestic Violence –is an abuse of power perpetrated mainly (but not only) by men against women in a relationship and after separation. It occurs when one partner attempts physically and/or psychologically to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence takes a number of forms. The most commonly acknowledged forms are physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse, and economic deprivation.

Possible Indicators:

- Resident is fearful of spouse/carer
- Unexplained bruises and/or injuries
- Injuries that are not consistent with resident's explanation
- Spouse/carer is excessively controlling
- Spouse/carer begins to be controlling with staff and uses intimidation with staff when they do not get their way

3.2 Principles for Response

The NSW Task Force on Abuse of Older People has identified the following as the principles for response:

- The interest of the older person takes precedence over the interest of the older person's carer, family, significant others or other members of the community
- The safety of the older person is the major consideration
- If they are capable of doing so, individuals are to be encouraged and assisted to make their own decisions, being provided with information about all relevant options and given the option to refuse services
- Confidentiality of information is to be respected in accordance with professional ethics, agency policy and legal obligations
- Assault and some other forms of abuse (such as theft and fraud) are criminal offences
- The older person is entitled to have an independent advocate of his or her own choice
- Violence is unacceptable, but when dealing with a carer who admits to abusing an older person, convey acceptance of the carer but not of the abusive behaviour
- Abuse should be seen in context of the complexities of the older person's social relationship
- A perpetrator of abuse may be a carer, family member, friend, stranger or staff member.
- The assessment and intervention carried out by members of a multidisciplinary team is the fundamental basis for the development of this policy.

3.3 Reporting of an abusive situation

3.3.1 Report all suspected abuse of the older person or their carer to your immediate supervisor immediately, including filling in an accident/incident report.

3.3.2 The supervisor/manager will, in turn, report the concerns to the medical officer, mental health team, social worker, police or a combination of these services depending of the type and severity of the suspected abuse.

3.3.3 If the abuse is suspected within business hours the Village Manager should be informed as soon as possible so that an appropriate response can be coordinated with appropriate personnel and in consultation with management. If the abuse is suspected after hours the Village Manager should be informed of the suspected abuse on the next business day so that they are able to appropriately coordinate follow-up services as needed .

3.3.4 If the Village Manager is unavailable Teman Administration can be contacted on 1800 836 262

3.3.5 The issue of cultural needs should be ascertained on initial assessment and appropriate culturally sensitive services and support provided.

3.4 Staff support

3.4.1 Situations of abuse and suspected abuse can be stressful and confronting for staff members involved. It is important that team members have the opportunity to debrief with managers, feel supported and have avenues to gain further assistance. Please contact Teman Administration directly if you have feel you need further support.

3.5 Further information

Below is a list of phone numbers for services that may be useful in an elder abuse situation:

- Police: 000 for all emergencies
- Police assistance line (non emergency/General inquiry: 13 1444 (also ask for domestic violence liaison officer) 24hrs / 7 days a week
- Aged Care Complaints Scheme: 1800 550 552
- Family and Community Service (24hrs) 132 111
- Any hospital emergency department near you
- Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT): 024985 5700
- Domestic Violence Advocacy Service: 1800 810 784 (legal service staffed by solicitors)
- Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 656 463 (24 hours/ 7 days; for staff and residents)
- Guardianship division with NCAT : 1800 463 928 / 3003364103
- Hunter Carer Respite: 1800 059 059 (can organise emergency respite 24 hour service)
- Carer Respite Centre: 1800 052 222 (can organise emergency respite 24 hour service)
- Indigenous Women's Legal Contact Line: 1800 639 784, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 1000 – 1230)
- Lifeline: 13 11 14 (can organise accommodation. at women's refuge for individuals experiencing DV)

- National Dementia helpline: 1800 100 500
- LawAccess NSW: 1300 888 529
- Local GP

References :

<http://www.cpaaustralia.com.au/professional-resources/practice-management/financial-abuse-of-older-people/?Division=New+South+Wales&Segment=The+Res>