

Abuse and Neglect

8.0

Child, Elder, Incapacitated Adults or Other Vulnerable Individuals

Purpose

To provide a process for identification, assessment, management, and reporting of patients who are suspected of having been abused, neglected, and/or exploited. This includes physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglectful acts or omissions by self or others, and/or the illegal use of an incapacitated adult's person or property for profit or advantage.

Scene Safety

Maintain a heightened awareness of scene safety. Family members or caregivers may exhibit anger; family member or caregiver may be the perpetrator.

Procedure for Assessment

- Provide emotional support and comfort.
- Treat and document assessment findings using appropriate medical treatment protocols without causing undue emotional trauma.
- Limit physical contact with patient to that which is required to perform assessment and treatment.
- Interview patient in a calm, respectful, and private manner, while observing for:
 - Mental status.
 - Inappropriate fears or atypical reaction to situation.
 - Avoidance behaviors.
 - Inappropriate interaction with caregiver, parent, or spouse.
- Do not interrogate, accuse, or otherwise address specifics of abuse or neglect to patient, caregiver, parent, or spouse.
- Obtain pertinent history relating to presenting injuries or illness.
- Document verbatim any patient statements of instances of rough handling, sexual abuse, alcohol/drug abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, isolation or confinement, misuse of property, threats, and gross neglect such as restriction of fluids, food, medications, or hygienic care.
- Note any potential indicator of an abusive or neglectful circumstance or environment:
 - Unsolicited history provided by the patient.
 - Delay in seeking care for injury or illness.
 - Injury inconsistent with history provided, the patient's developmental abilities, or mobility potential.
 - Conflicting reports regarding injury from the patient, caregiver, parent, or spouse.
 - Patient unable, or unwilling, to describe mechanism of injury.
 - Injuries in unusual locations, (e.g., genital area).
 - Multiple fractures, bruises or other injuries in various stages of healing.
 - Scald burns with demarcated immersion lines without splash marks.
 - Scald burns involving anterior or posterior half of extremity.
 - Scald burns involving buttocks or genitalia.
 - Burns or injuries consistent with cigarette burns, rope burns, or other identifiable patterned markings.
 - Patient confined to restricted space or position.
 - Pregnancy or presence of sexually transmitted disease in child or vulnerable adult.
 - Problems with living conditions and environment.

Special Considerations

- Contact law enforcement.
- According to NH laws, any and all cases of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children or adults must be reported. This applies even in cases when the patient is not transported.
- If a parent/guardian refuses treatment of a minor child or an incapacitated adult whom you feel needs medical attention, contact law enforcement immediately.
- Written documentation is vital because the "story" often changes as investigation proceeds.

Policy Continues

Reporting Procedures**Child Abuse***

Report suspected child abuse immediately

- Call Child Abuse Report Line, 800-894-5533 or (603) 271-6556 between the work hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.
 - Call local police department during non-work hours and holidays and follow up with a telephone call to the Child Abuse Report Line during work hours.
 - Informing hospital personnel or involving law enforcement does not fulfill legal reporting responsibilities in accordance with state law.
 - Do not send reports of suspected child abuse by email.

* Responsibility for reporting child abuse and protection from liability for such reporting is established by the NH Child Protection Act, Chapter 169-C.

Abuse to Elders and Incapacitated Adults**

- Report suspected adult abuse immediately
- Call the Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services at 800-949-0470 between the work hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, for adults in any of the following situations when suspected incident occurred:
 - Independent living situation (own home or apartment, home or apartment of friends or relatives, boarding home, or no fixed address).
 - Homes or programs affiliated with the Bureau of Behavioral Health or the Bureau of Developmental Services.
 - Hospital or rehabilitation center.

Call the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman at 800-422-5640 or 603-271-4375 between the work hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, for adult residents of nursing or assisted living facilities.

Call the local police department during non-work hours and holidays and follow up with a telephone call to the Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services or Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman during work hours.

**Responsibility and protection from liability for reporting an incapacitated adult or an adult who has been subjected to abuse, neglect, self-neglect or exploitation, or is living in hazardous conditions is established by the NH Elderly and Adult Services Act Chapter 161-F:42 & F:46.