

Indicators of Elder and Adult at Risk Abuse, Neglect, and Self-Neglect

Indicators are signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect. The presence of these signs does not necessarily mean that abuse or neglect is occurring; however they may suggest the need for further investigation, especially if multiple indicators are present.

Indicators may be physical symptoms or signs, environmental (there is something in the residence that is suggestive of abuse), behavioral (the way victims and perpetrators act or interact), or financial.

PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Injury that has not been cared for properly.
- Injury that is inconsistent with explanation for its cause.
- Pain from touching.
- Cuts, puncture wounds, burns, bruises, welts, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions.
- Dehydration or malnutrition without illness-related cause.
- Weight loss.
- Poor coloration.
- Sunken eyes or cheeks.
- Inappropriate administration of medication.
- Soiled clothing or bed.
- Frequent use of hospital or health care/doctor-shopping.
- Lack of necessities such as food, water, or utilities.
- Lack of personal effects, pleasant living environment, personal items.
- Forced isolation.

SIGNS OF FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Frequent expensive gifts from adult-at-risk to caregiver.
- Sudden change in financial situations.
- Adult-at-risk's personal belongings, papers, credit cards missing.
- Numerous unpaid bills.
- A recent will when elder seems incapable of writing will .
- Caregiver's name added to bank account.
- Elder unaware of monthly income.
- Adult-at-risk signs on loan.
- Frequent checks made out to "cash".
- Unusual activity in bank account.
- Irregularities on tax return.
- Individual unaware of reason for appointment with banker or attorney.
- Caregiver's refusal to spend money on elder.
- Signatures on checks or legal documents that do not resemble client's.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- Fear, embarrassed, ashamed.
- Sudden change in alertness.
- Anxiety, agitation.

- Anger.
- Isolation, withdrawal.
- Depression.
- Non-responsiveness, resignation, ambivalence.
- Contradictory statements, implausible stories.
- Hesitation to talk openly, especially in presence of specific people or looks to that person to answer questions.
- Confusion or disorientation.
- Suddenly withdraws from routine activities.
- Provides implausible or inconsistent explanation about what has occurred.

SIGNS BY CAREGIVER

- Prevents adult-at-risk from speaking to or seeing visitors.
- Anger, indifference, aggressive behavior toward adult-at-risk.
- History of substance abuse, mental illness, criminal behavior, or family violence.
- Lack of affection toward elder.
- Flirtation or coyness as possible indicator of inappropriate sexual relationship.
- Frequent arguments.
- Belittling or threats.
- Conflicting accounts of incidents.
- Withholds affection.
- Talks of adult-at-risk as a burden.

SELF NEGLECT

- Isolation and declining physical ability.
- Hoarding.
- Failure to seek medical treatment or take needed medications.
- Reluctance to leave their homes to visit a doctor's office, clinic, or hospital or lack of medical care for a prolonged period of time.
- Poor hygiene.
- Clutter; lack of housecleaning.
- Wandering and confusion.
- Leaving the stove or water faucet unattended.
- Debilitated home or filth.
- Signs of malnutrition.
- General decline.