

# REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, ELDERS

**If abuse is suspected, you MUST report to the appropriate agency as listed below. Reporting to an agency allows experienced professionals to determine if intervention is needed.**

## Safety Pathway: Child Abuse

1. If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, **call 911. See Calling 911 Protocol.**
2. If you suspect a person may be a perpetrator or victim of child abuse, **contact CRC consultant for guidance** (see page 2).
  - If consultant cannot be reached before end of day, contact supervisor, Navigator or Care Resource Manager for consultation.
3. If, based on this consultation, it is determined that a report should be filed:
  - Inform supervisor (if not already done in step 2).
  - Report the abuse to the [Massachusetts Child Protective Services at the Massachusetts Child at Risk hotline](#): 1-800-792-5200.
4. Mark 'Safety Concern' in the home assessment/referral to resource coordinator. Document that call was made.

## Safety Pathway: Abuse of Persons with Disabilities

1. If you suspect a person with a disability is in immediate danger, **call 911. See Calling 911 Protocol.**
2. If you suspect a person may be a perpetrator or victim of abuse or neglect of a person with a disability, **contact CRC consultant for guidance** (see page 2).
  - If consultant cannot be reached before end of day, contact supervisor, Navigator or Care Resource Manager for consultation.
3. If, based on this consultation, it is determined that a report should be filed:
  - Inform supervisor (if not already done in step 2).
  - Report the abuse to the [Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission \(DPPC\)](#) at 1-800-426-9009.
4. Mark 'Safety Concern' in the home assessment/referral to resource coordinator. Document that call was made.

## Safety Pathway: Elder Abuse (abuse of adults over the age of 60)

1. If you suspect an elder is in immediate danger, **call 911. See Calling 911 Protocol.**
2. If you suspect a person may be a perpetrator or victim of vulnerable adult abuse ("elder abuse"), **contact CRC consultant for guidance** (see page 2).
  - If consultant cannot be reached before end of day, contact supervisor, Navigator or Care Resource Manager for consultation.
3. If, based on this consultation, it is determined that a report should be filed:
  - Inform supervisor (if not already done in step 2).
  - Report the abuse to [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) at 1-800-922-2275.
4. Mark 'Safety Concern' in the home assessment/referral to resource coordinator. Document that call was made.

# REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, ELDERS

## Signs of Abuse or Neglect with Seniors or Adults with Disabilities

The presence of one or even several of these warning signs may be a sign that the individual or family are in need of a referral for services to meet the needs of the individual so that they may be safe in their home. When considering filing a report of elder abuse, we should strive for cultural awareness of the lived experiences of the families we are speaking with and what unintended consequences any interventions may have. If a report of elder abuse is made to DPH, please make every possible attempt to include the patient/contact in this process.

**Self-Neglect:** This occurs when the senior or adult with disabilities cannot take care of their basic physical, psychological or social needs which puts their safety & well-being at risk. This includes being able to successfully obtain and manage food, clothing, shelter & healthcare for the individual's needs. Warning signs: Malnutrition/dehydration, poor hygiene, bedsores, inappropriate clothing; Mismanagement of medications; Home safety issues, hoarding behavior, lack of proper utilities; Eviction or foreclosure; Wandering, unsafe behavior such as unsafe smoking, unsafe driving; Unpaid bills, compulsive spending.

**Caregiver neglect:** Identified individual(s) who fail to provide the physical, emotional and social needs of adults dependent on others for their primary care. Neglect can take the form of withholding food, medications or access to health care professionals.

**Financial exploitation:** The misuse, mishandling or exploitation of property, possessions or assets of adults. Also includes using another's assets without consent, under false pretense, or through coercion and/or manipulation. Warning sign: Sudden changes in financial situations.

**Emotional abuse:** Creating emotional pain, distress or anguish through the use of threats, intimidation or humiliation. This includes insults, yelling or threats of harm and/or isolation, or non-verbal actions such as throwing objects or glaring to project fear and/or intimidation. Warning signs: Unexpected and unknown reason for no longer participating in regular activities; sudden changes in alertness, new or increased signs of depression, difficulty with relationships and increase in arguments with caregivers.

**Physical abuse:** Slapping, hitting, beating, bruising or causing someone physical pain, injury or suffering. Also, it includes confining an adult against their will – i.e. locking someone in a room or tying them to furniture. Warning signs: bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions, burns

**Sexual abuse:** Physical force, threats or coercion into non-consensual touching, fondling, intercourse or other sexual activities. This is especially true with vulnerable adults who can't give verbal consent or don't have the cognitive capacity to understand what is happening

# REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF CHILDREN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, ELDERS

## Definitions/Signs of Abuse or Neglect of Children

The presence of one or even several of these signs may be an indication that the individual or family may need a referral for services in order to meet the needs of the individual so that they may be safe in their home. When considering filing a report of child abuse by a caregiver, it is important to weigh the risks to the family and how making a report may intersect with concerns related to immigration status, systemic racism, and domestic violence. If a report of child abuse is made to the Department of Children and Families, always include parents in the decision-making and reporting, unless it is not safe to do so. Domestic violence in the home may be reportable, but not every situation requires intervention by the Department of Children and Families. Refer to [Domestic Violence protocol](#) for more information.

**Abuse:** The non-accidental commission of any act by a **caregiver** which causes or creates a substantial risk of **physical** or **emotional injury** or **sexual abuse** of a child; or the victimization of a child through **sexual exploitation** or **human trafficking**, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver.

**Neglect:** Failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care; provided, however, that **such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a disability**. Homelessness and poverty are NOT a reason to file a child abuse report.

**Physical injury** : Death, fracture of a bone, subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, soft tissue swelling, skin bruising and any other such nontrivial injury depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred, and the number and location of bruises.

**Emotional injury:** An impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by an observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function with a normal range of performance and behavior.

**Sexual abuse:** Any non-accidental act by a caregiver upon a child that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual contact between a caregiver and a child for whom the caregiver is responsible.

**Sexually exploited child:** The victim of the crime of sexual servitude or is the victim of sex trafficking; engages, agrees to engage or offers to engage in sexual conduct with another person in exchange for a fee, or in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, education or care

**Human trafficking victim:** A person who is subjected to harboring, recruitment, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting for the purpose of: Sex trafficking (i.e., inducement to perform a commercial sex act, forced sexual services and/or sexually explicit performance), and/or Labor trafficking (i.e., forced services, involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery)

Source: Massachusetts General Law

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