

13

Elder Abuse and Neglect: Preventing, Recognizing, and Reporting

Teaching Plan

To use this lesson for self-study, the learner should read the material, do the activity, and take the test. For group study, the leader may give each learner a copy of the learning guide and follow this teaching plan to conduct the lesson.

The topic of this lesson is required by many state regulatory agencies on an annual basis for staff that care for the elderly. It covers the prevention, recognition, and reporting of elder abuse and neglect.

Learning objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Define different kinds of abuse and neglect
- Identify symptoms of caregiver stress that could lead to abuse or neglect
- List ways to prevent abuse and neglect
- Recognize signs of abuse and neglect
- Know how to report elder abuse and neglect

Lesson activities

Introduce the lesson to your learners by asking them to do the “Ways Elders are Abused” matching activity in the learning guide, either individually or as a group.

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

Answers to “Ways Elders Are Abused” matching activity.

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. e
5. a
6. f

Ask if anyone can add anything to “Other Ways Elders Are Abused.”

Who are the victims?

State that the typical abuse victim lives with and depends on a family member for daily care, but abuse is also a problem in institutional settings. Most victims are female, age 75 or over, with a mental or physical illness. Most are completely dependent on the abuser.

Who are the abusers?

State that most abusers are relatives who take care of the elderly person. The abusers may have problems such as alcohol or drug dependence, emotional or mental illness, or stress. Many times, the abusers need as much help as the victim.

Caregiver stress

Explain that caregiver stress can be a problem for anyone caring for the elderly, and that this can lead to abuse in an institutional setting. Instruct the learners to fill out the questionnaire “Are You an Overly Stressed Caregiver?” Ask for discussion. Point out that this questionnaire could be used for family caregivers as well.

Preventing abuse and neglect

Point out the ideas for preventing abuse at the bottom of the learning guide's first page. State:

1. Professional caregivers have valuable skills about ways to care for the elderly. Work is less stressful when we know how to do it well. We can also teach these skills to family members.
2. We can help each other by listening while we vent frustrations and by working together to solve problems. We can help family members by listening to their frustrations.
3. We must observe the elderly person's rights at all times and teach them to others.

Recognizing abuse and neglect

Review the signs of abuse and neglect, and point out that some of these could happen even at an agency that cares for the elderly. Everyone should be alert to the signs.

Reporting abuse and neglect

Explain your agency's and your state's reporting procedures, giving the appropriate regulatory agency's name and number to the learners.

Give learners a copy of the statement of patient or elder rights for your state.

The lesson

Review the material in the lesson with participants. Allow for discussion.

Conclusion

Have participants take the test. Review the answers together. Award certificates to those who answer at least seven (70%) of the test questions correctly.

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

Test answers

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. c
5. c
6. d
7. d
8. b
9. respect

Elder Abuse and Neglect: Preventing, Recognizing, and Reporting

Elder abuse: Any mistreatment or neglect of an elderly person. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.

There is no acceptable excuse for abuse and neglect of the elderly, but recognizing and preventing the problem of caregiver stress may help prevent some elder abuse.

Ways Elders Are Abused

Match the definition to the term:

1. _____ Psychological abuse
 2. _____ Neglect
 3. _____ Physical abuse
 4. _____ Rights violations
 5. _____ Financial abuse
 6. _____ Sexual abuse
-
- a. Stealing or mismanaging the money, property, or belongings of an older person. Also called exploitation.
 - b. Using physical force to cause physical pain or injury.
 - c. Failing to provide something necessary for health and safety, such as personal care, food, shelter, or medicine.

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

- d. Causing emotional or psychological pain. Includes isolation, verbal abuse, threats, and humiliation.
- e. Confining someone against his will, or strictly controlling the elder's behavior. Includes improper use of restraints and medications to control difficult behaviors.
- f. Forcing sexual contact without the elder person's consent, including touching or sexual talk.

Other ways elders are abused:

- Overmedicating
- Denying aids such as walkers, eyeglasses, or dentures
- Dirty living conditions
- Inadequate heating and air conditioning

Are You an Overly Stressed Caregiver?

Do you agree with the following statements? Write "yes" or "no."

1. I am frequently unable to sleep because I have so much on my mind. _____
2. Most of the time I don't feel very good. _____
3. I have difficulty concentrating and often forget to do routine tasks. _____
4. I feel depressed or sad much of the time. _____
5. I feel worried and anxious almost all the time. _____
6. I lose my temper easily and become angry at other people. _____
7. I don't think there's anything wrong with me; I just wish everyone else would stop doing things that upset me. _____
8. Most days I feel irritable and moody, often snapping at others. _____
9. I feel tired almost all the time, and just drag myself through my days. _____
10. I'm too busy to do anything fun or to go out with my friends. _____

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

Any “yes” answers could be a sign of excessive stress. More than three “yes” answers should prompt you to talk to your supervisor or physician about the way you are feeling.

Signs of Elder Abuse and Neglect

As our population ages, the elderly start becoming frail and may suffer hearing and vision loss and become unable to think as clearly as they once could. This leaves them open for unscrupulous people to take advantage of them.

Types of elder abuse include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect and abandonment by a caregiver
- Financial exploitation
- Healthcare fraud and abuse

Be concerned if you see an elderly person showing the following new behaviors or signs:

- **General signs of abuse:**
 - Becoming withdrawn, unusually quiet, depressed, or shy
 - Becoming anxious, worried, easily upset
 - Refusing care from caregivers
 - Not wanting to be around people and not wanting to see visitors
- **Physical abuse signs:**
 - Bruises or burns
 - In a woman, vaginal bleeding or bruising of the genitals or thighs
 - Fractures
 - Unreasonable or inconsistent explanations for injuries

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

- Frequent emergency room visits
- Caregiver refusal to allow the nurse to see the patient alone
- **Emotional abuse signs:**
 - Belittling, threatening, or controlling behavior by the caregiver in your presence
 - Behavior from the patient that mimics dementia; i.e., rocking or mumbling
- **Financial abuse signs**
 - Items or cash are reported missing from the home
 - Unnecessary goods, services, or numerous subscriptions
- **Healthcare fraud signs:**
 - The patient complains about duplicate billing for the same service provided
 - Evidence of the patient being over- or under-medicated
- **Signs of possible neglect:**
 - Weight loss, malnutrition, or dehydration
 - Insufficient clothing, shoes, or basic hygiene items
 - Medications not filled or taken
 - Doctor visits not scheduled or kept
 - Unclean appearance or smell
 - Skin ulcers or sores
 - Declining health
 - Unsafe living conditions (e.g., no running water)

While most of these things are controlled in an institution, it is possible for any of them to occur anywhere. Abusive or neglectful caregivers can be professionals as well as family members. It is important for everyone to be alert to the signs.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Anyone who knows of an elderly person being abused or neglected is obligated to notify the proper authorities. Reporting procedures vary by state. Home health staff who suspect abuse of a patient by either a family member or another professional caregiver should first report it to their supervisors. You should

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT: PREVENTING, RECOGNIZING, AND REPORTING

become familiar with any statements of rights that your state has issued to protect homecare patients—ask your supervisor for a copy.

Every state has an office or department that deals with abuse and neglect of the elderly. There are different names for these offices: Human Services, Adult Protective Services, Health and Welfare, Department of Aging, etc. Write the name and number of your state agency here:

This is the place to call when you know of, or suspect, elder abuse or neglect.

Prevention

You can help prevent abuse and neglect by:

- Listening to the patient and caregivers
- Intervening when abuse or neglect is suspected
- Educating the patient and caregivers on how to recognize abuse and neglect

TEST

Elder Abuse and Neglect

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____

Directions: Circle the right answers (Need seven out of 10 correct answers to receive certificate.)

1. If you know of, or suspect, abuse or neglect of an elderly person, you should *first*

- a. confront the staff member or family member that you suspect of doing the abuse
- b. call the state agency that accepts abuse reports
- c. report it to your supervisor

2. Some causes of abuse and neglect are _____

- a. caregiver stress
- b. emotional or mental illness
- c. alcohol or drug use
- d. all of the above

3. Threatening an elderly person with punishment for not doing what you tell them to is

- a. acceptable if done with a soft tone of voice
- b. verbal abuse, and never acceptable
- c. useful in disciplining an older person

4. Exploitation is a form of abuse that involves _____

- a. physical harm
- b. emotional harm
- c. misuse or theft of money, property, or other financial assets

TEST

Elder Abuse and Neglect (cont.)

5. Some good ways to help prevent abuse are _____.
- a. education, counseling, and support groups
 - b. listening, teaching caregiving skills, and communicating
 - c. both a and b
6. Symptoms of possible abuse include the following:
- a. Dementia
 - b. Becoming unusually quiet or withdrawn
 - c. Bruises or burns
 - d. both b and c
7. Symptoms of possible neglect include the following:
- a. Necessary medical visits not scheduled or kept
 - b. Too many outside activities
 - c. Lack of basic hygiene items and adequate clothing
 - d. both a and c
8. Improper use of bedrails or other restraints is considered _____.
- a. physical abuse
 - b. rights violation
 - c. emotional abuse
9. Abuse and neglect will not occur if we remember that everyone has the right to be treated with _____.