

Hearts & Hands Elder Abuse Policy

Elder Abuse

- Because of your direct work with elderly, frail and disabled individuals Hearts and Hands believes that it is essential for you to know the signs of these different types of abuse and how to intervene and advocate on behalf of our care receivers.

Elder abuse is a world-wide social problem. It is estimated that one in ten adults over the age of 60 will be the victim of abuse or neglect. Elder abuse is also an underreported crime. While about 1500 cases are reported in Erie County each year only 5% of victims ever report their abuse to law enforcement. While abuse can happen to anyone, recent research from the United Kingdom suggests that about 70% of elder abuse victims are women and 78% are over the age of 70.

Elder abuse is defined by the World Health Organization as "a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person."

(elderabuse.org.uk) While a variety of circumstances are considered elder abuse, it does not include general criminal activity such as break-ins, muggings on the street, etc.

The common types of elder abuse include:

- Physical – hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, restraining, false imprisonment, confinement, giving excessive or improper medications, withholding treatment.
- Psychological/Emotional – A common theme is a perpetrator who identifies something that matters to an older person and then uses it to coerce them into a particular action. It can also be yelling, name calling, humiliating, constantly criticizing, blaming, ignoring, withdrawing affection.
- Financial – misappropriation of financial resources, stealing, using financial means to control the person or to facilitate other types of abuse.

- Sexual – forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without their consent including forcing them to participate in conversations of a sexual nature against their will.
- Neglect – depriving a person of proper medical treatment, food, heat, clothing or comfort or essential medication. Also, depriving a person of needed services to force certain kinds of actions, financial and otherwise. Neglect can also include leaving an at-risk person unattended.

The following are types of abuse are not always recognized as abuse:

- Self-neglect – any person not caring about their own health, well-being, or safety. While this is treated differently than abuse self-neglect can lead to injury, illness, or even death.
- Rights abuse – denying the civil and constitutional rights to a person who is older, but not declared by a court to be mentally incapacitated.
- Abandonment – deserting a dependent person with the intent to abandon them or leave them unattended at a place for such a time as may be likely to endanger their health or welfare.

Some Signs of Elder Abuse:

- Broken bones or fractures
- Poor physical appearance
- Changes in mental state
- Frequent infections
- Bruising, welts, or cuts
- Unexplained weight loss
- Refusal to speak
- Signs of dehydration
- Lack of cleanliness

In addition to signs observed in an elderly individual, abuse can also be detected by noticing changes in the caregivers' behavior. For example, the caregiver may not allow them to speak with family, friends or visitors or receive visitors. The caregiver may exhibit indifference or a lack of affection toward the elder or refer to the elder as a burden.

Hearts and Hands Elder Abuse Policy and Procedures

Policy

All agency board of directors, staff, contractors, and volunteers shall receive training before interacting with the elderly, frail, and disabled individuals linked with Hearts and Hands. The training shall teach participants how to recognize the signs and different types of abuse, how to appropriately intervene, advocate, and report the abuse.

Members of the board of directors shall be trained during their orientation period in-person. Thereafter, members shall review the policy and certify they have read the policy and had an opportunity to ask questions at the annual meeting.

Staff members shall be trained in-person within the first two weeks of employment. All staff members will attend a virtual training annually and certify they took the training and have read the policy and procedure.

Contractors who engage with our care recipients shall receive a copy of the policy and procedure as an addendum to their contract and agree that all individuals involved in direct contact with the elderly population has read and understood our policy stance on Elder Abuse.

Volunteers shall receive a copy of the Elder Abuse policy and procedure in their training manual. The policy will be reviewed as part of the 90 minute orientation. The policy shall be posted on the website for them to refer back too. Volunteers will sign an attestation at the end of their orientation indicating they have agreed to all of the policies and procedure of Hearts and Hands. A copy of this policy and procedure will

be highlighted in the October Newsletter each year as reinforcement training. Volunteers will electronically attest to reviewing the training before December 31 of each year. Volunteers who do not comply will have mileage checks held until they comply with recertification.

Procedure

The health and safety of our care receivers is a primary concern for Hearts and Hands, it is the essence of what we do. Our care receivers can be vulnerable to many different types of abuse and neglect due to their physical or cognitive limitations.

Because of your direct work with elderly, frail and disabled individuals Hearts and Hands believes that it is essential for you to know the signs of these different types of abuse and how to intervene and advocate on behalf of our care receivers. The information and video presented here are designed to help you understand more about elder abuse.

How to respond:

If you observe any signs of abuse or molestation and suspect that a care receiver is in immediate danger, call 911 immediately. Stay with the care receiver until help arrives. After the situation is resolved and the care receiver is safe call your coordinator, the Program Services Directors, or another Hearts and Hands staff member.

If you observe signs of on-going, non-life-threatening forms of abuse or molestation or suspect for any reason that a care receiver is the victim of such abuse call your coordinator as soon as possible.

When a member of Hearts and Hands is informed that there is a suspicion of any abuse Hearts and Hands, we will document observations in the care receiver's profile and contact Adult Protective Services in the appropriate jurisdiction. Any additional follow-up information will be recorded in the care receiver's profile.

Emergency contacts will be contacted by phone and in writing when an abuse or molestation claim has been made, unless it would impede the investigation of Adult Protective Services or local Law Enforcement's effort in the investigation.

Agency has a zero-tolerance policy for elder abuse. Any staff members being found as a perpetrator will be subject to termination. Volunteers will be subject to being terminated as a volunteer with a notation marked in their file to not onboard in the future. Board members will be subject to a vote to remove them from the board of directors.

Elder Abuse Video Link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4buPb2toFS0>