

abuse

Abuse can happen in all sorts of relationships including caring. Caring can be stressful for everyone involved, especially carers and the person being cared for, and sometimes abuse can occur.

Q. What are the types of abuse?

The five main types of abuse are:

➤ **Physical:**

the infliction of physical pain or injury, or physical coercion. Examples include: hitting, slapping, pushing, burning and physical restraint.

➤ **Emotional:**

the infliction of mental anguish, involving actions that cause fear of violence, isolation or deprivation, and/or feelings of shame, indignity and powerlessness. For example, humiliation, emotional blackmail, blaming, intimidation, enforced social isolation and so on.

➤ **Financial/Economic:**

the illegal or improper use of a person's property or finances. Examples include: misappropriation of money, valuables or property, forced changes to wills or other legal documents, denial of right of access to, or control over personal funds.

➤ **Sexual:**

sexually abusive or exploitative behaviour, ranging from sexual harassment, indecent assault to rape.

➤ **Neglect:**

the failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical, personal or dental care. It may also involve the refusal to permit others to provide appropriate care.

However none of these actions, in and of themselves, necessarily imply abuse. The entire situation must be properly assessed.

Q. Who is at risk of being abused?

Both care recipients and carers can be susceptible to abuse. For example, care recipients with dementia, mental illness or a brain injury who develop abusive or aggressive behaviours may abuse their carers or other family members as a result of their illness, or carers under stress may abuse the care recipient. Generally speaking greater vulnerability exposes a person to a higher risk of abuse, as they are more dependent on other people. Furthermore, abuse can occur across all socio-economic, age and cultural groups.

Q. What happens when there is a history of abuse?

When there has been a history of abuse within the relationship, prior to the caring situation, this abuse can often increase as a result of the illness or disability of the care recipient. Likewise, it can increase because of stress or frustration experienced by the carer. Both carers and carer recipients in this situation will often be caught up in feelings of guilt and increased resentment, which is further complicated by their past dependency on the abusive relationship. This dependency is what leads to powerlessness and they are often caught between their need to escape the abuse and their sense of loyalty or fear of abandonment. Seeking help to deal with the abuse and the feelings of guilt and powerlessness is important for their mental and physical wellbeing and to the caring situation.

Q. Who can help when abuse occurs?

- ✓ *if you don't know where to start, ring the **Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre** on **1800 242 636** for information, advice, referral and someone to talk to;*
- ✓ *you may ring the 24 hour **Domestic Violence Crisis and Counselling Line** on **1800 656 463** (interpreters available);*
- ✓ *if you are currently in contact with a service provider, such as a Community Nurse, Home Care Co-ordinator, support group leader or respite co-ordinator and you'd like to talk to someone you know, raise the issue with them;*
- ✓ *if you or the person you are caring for is aged 65 or more, you may contact your nearest Aged Care Assessment Team, who will discuss appropriate interventions with you, based on what you would like to happen;*
- ✓ *talk to your General Practitioner;*
- ✓ *contact your local Women's Health Centre;*
- ✓ *where there is a history of mental illness, contact the **Mental Health Crisis Team** at your local hospital;*
- ✓ *where there is a history of dementia, contact the **Dementia Behavioural Advisory Service** on **1300 366 448**;*
- ✓ *if necessary, seek legal advice (free advice may be available through Community Legal Centres);*
- ✓ *if situation is dangerous, contact the Police.*

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REFERENCES:

NSW Ageing and Disability Department, Dealing with Abuse of Clients and their Carers – A Training Kit, 1996

Villamanta Legal Service: Duty of Care: Who's Responsible?; Training Manual on Duty of Care, Negligence and User Rights.

Information contained in this fact sheet was supplied by the relevant authorities and is believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Whilst every care has been taken in its preparation, this fact sheet contains only guidelines in relation to its subject matter.

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