

An Introduction to Elder Abuse

Self – Neglect (Related)Phenomenon

Understanding Self-Neglect

Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Define and describe self-neglect
- Identify indicators of self-neglect
- Identify strategies to respond to possible self-neglect situations

Case Example

- Neighbors called authorities to check on the welfare of Juan, their a 91-year-old neighbor.
- Police found that Juan had a serious medical condition and was unable to care for himself.
- Garbage and rotten food was found all over the house. The house had large holes in the floor, exposed electrical wiring, and parts of the roof which were open to the sky.

Case Example (cont.)

- Anastasia is 89 and lives in a trailer with her 9 cats. The cats are underweight, have flea and tick infestations, and eye infections.
- Her trailer is piled high with old papers and bags of trash. A single narrow path leads from the door to a reclining chair. There is a strong odor of urine and feces.
- Anastasia has open wounds on her legs which she claims are caused by killer rays coming through the television.

Self-Neglect

- “...an adult’s inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including:
 - a) obtaining essential food, clothing, shelter, and medical care;
 - (b) obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, emotional well-being, and general safety; and
 - (c) managing one’s own financial affairs.
- Life-style choices or living arrangements alone do not prove self-neglect.



Consider adding state, tribal, or territorial statutes relating to self-neglect here.

Consider discussing reporting laws in the Response Section (slide 17).

Significance of Self-Neglect

- Most common referral to Adult Protective Services agencies (Dyer, et al, 2006)
- Risk factor for premature death (Lachs, et al, 1998)
- May co-occur with other forms of elder abuse (Pavlik, Hyman, Festa & Dyer, 2001)
- May precede or follow an elder abuse victimization

Challenges

- Adults have a right to make their own decisions until a court finds evidence to the contrary.
- Determining if a person who self-neglects has the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves, including decisions which may endanger their health or safety, can be difficult.
- Capacity can fluctuate and be difficult to assess.
- Finding trained evaluators (e.g., psychologists who work with the elderly) can be challenging.

Indicators: Older Adult

- Displaying mental confusion, depression, paranoia
- Appearing malnourished, dehydrated
- Refusing or failing to seek needed medical care or to take prescribed medications
- Failing to attend to personal hygiene
- Wearing clothing that is dirty or unsuitable for conditions
- Being homeless

Indicators: Environment

- Hoarding (e.g. collecting trash, animals)
- Vermin or insect infestations
- Home is unclean or has hazardous conditions (e.g., holes in floor or roof, exposed electrical wires, piles of animal droppings, rotting food)
- Unpaid bills, rent, lapsed insurance policies
- Plumbing broken; lack of clean running water
- Utilities unpaid, not working, services turned off

Indicators: Environment (cont.)



Indicators Environmental (cont.)



Indicators - Environmental (cont.)



Response to Abuse in Self-Neglect

What You Can Do

- **Recognize the Signs of Self-Neglect**
- **Ask**
- **Report or Refer**

If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking:

- Describe your day.
- Do you have any concerns about living here?
- Do you have a doctor? For what is the doctor treating you? Are you taking any medications?

If The Older Adult Can Answer Questions, Consider Asking:

- How do you pay your bills? (Be sure the person describes every step from opening the mail to putting a paid bill into the mail)
- What kind of food do you have in the house? How is it prepared?

Report and Refer

REPORT

- If medical concerns, call EMTs or paramedics
- To Adult Protective Services (APS)

REFER

- Mental health agencies
- Animal welfare such as Humane Society
- Health department
- Code enforcement agencies



Consider inserting slides
describing the local jurisdiction's
elder abuse/
vulnerable adult reporting law



Consider adding local resources and programs. (See “*A Guide to Planning Your Elder Abuse Presentation*” at ***** for more information.)

Additional Resources

- [National Center on Elder Abuse \(NCEA\)](#)
- [National Adult Protective Services Resource Center \(NAPSRC\)](#)
- [The Humane Society of America](#)

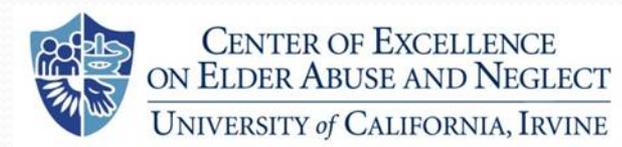
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For additional resources, visit www.ncea.aoa.gov



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