

**Preventing, recognising and  
responding to the abuse of older  
people:  
Resources, policies and procedures**

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# Overview

*Preventing elder abuse in an ageing world is everybody's business.*

Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse, 2002

*Confronting and reducing elder abuse requires a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach.*

Active Ageing, A Policy Framework  
WHO, 2002

- The Benevolent Society's experience
  - Policies and procedures
- Other resources
  - Other states
  - Australian Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (ANPEA)

# The Benevolent Society

## Policies and Procedures

- Preventing abuse
  - Employee Code of Conduct
  - Volunteer Handbook
  - HR policies and procedures
  - Other policies
- Recognising abuse
  - Policy for care staff, supervisors and managers ←
  - Policy for volunteers
- Responding to abuse
  - Policies for care staff; for supervisors, managers; for senior managers/directors ←
  - Policy for volunteers

Model  
Policy  
for  
residential  
aged care

# Preventing abuse:

## HR policies and procedures

Create the right culture

During recruitment & selection

- set out clear expectations in position descriptions
- interview questions that help you explore their understanding of signs of abuse, how they would respond if reported to them
- reference checks (listen for avoidance of questions, equivocal answers), criminal record checks

During induction

- reinforce messages, in Code of Conduct, initial training

Ongoing education & communication

- in training, supervision, regular team meetings
- guidance and training for coordinators and managers on having conversations with staff who report suspicions

# Preventing abuse - cont

## Performance management

- manage performance if it deviates from expectations set
  - sends clear message
  - may prevent pattern of behaviour getting worse

## Other relevant policies (HR or Operations)

- Clients rights and responsibilities, client handbook
- Privacy and dignity
- Intimacy and sexuality
- Handling of clients' money
- Complaints policy

## Volunteer policies

- Volunteer recruitment and selection policies
- Volunteer Handbook

## Preventing abuse - cont

### Preventing abuse through empowering older people

- Planning ahead for substitute decision-making
- “Your Future Starts Now” publication

# Recognising abuse: Policies and Procedures

- For residential aged care or in community aged care
- Create awareness: Key messages
  - abuse can happen
  - the forms it may take, what the signs are
  - the signs may be subtle
  - don't dismiss verbal indications as 'dementia talk'
  - don't turn a blind eye
  - older people may be reluctant to admit, or uncertain as to whether particular behaviour constitutes abuse
  - signs may not mean that abuse has occurred
  - *but* they must be taken seriously, reported and investigated

# Responding to abuse:

## Policy and procedures for care workers

- So that they respond promptly & appropriately and know
  - when to report, to whom
  - how to respond, safely
- Key messages for careworkers
  - you must report to your supervisor if you
    - **witness, see signs of, suspect it may have occurred,**
    - **could be an action or inaction**
    - **are told about by resident, family, visitor, other staff etc**
  - failure to report may result in disciplinary action
  - it will be investigated and, if appropriate or required, reported to relevant authorities
  - you will be supported and protected

# In an Emergency: Flip chart page



## Response to an abusive situation

**REMAIN CALM:** Do not panic. Consider if you can safely stop the abuse.

**ALERT:** Other staff by using call bell or alarm system.

**REASSURE:** The older person. Offer comfort.

**PROTECT:** The scene. Do not alter or remove items from the area.

**ADVISE:** Your supervisor.

**RECORD:** Details of the event on appropriate document.

## Elder abuse

If you work in an aged care service you may see signs of older people being abused. Fortunately this doesn't happen very often but it is important that you know what abuse is, how to recognise it if someone is being abused and know what to do about it.

### What is elder abuse?

Abuse can be any harm to someone caused by another person in a position of trust or authority. The abuser could be a spouse or family member, a carer, friend, co-resident or a worker.

#### Examples include:

- o Physical - hitting, slapping, pushing or burning
- o Psychological/Emotional - verbal intimidation, humiliation and harassment, shouting and threats
- o Financial - misuse of the person's money, valuables or property, forced changes to legal documents and denying access to or control of personal funds
- o Sexual - indecent exposure or assault, sexual harassment or rape
- o Neglect - the intentional failure to provide basic life necessities

### How would I know if someone is being abused?

Apart from obvious signs of physical abuse, a person experiencing abuse may be:

- o Afraid of a particular person or people
- o Worried and anxious for no obvious reason
- o Irritable and overly emotional
- o Appearing helpless, hopeless and sad
- o Using contradictory statements, not as a result of mental confusion
- o Reluctant to talk openly
- o Avoiding physical, eye or verbal contact

### What should I do if I think someone is being abused?

Don't jump to conclusions but if any of these signs are present there is cause for concern which you should report to your supervisor.

#### Report a potentially abusive situation if:

- o There is a change in behaviour or mood or any of the signs mentioned
- o You observe someone behaving towards an older person in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable
- o An older person tells you that they are being abused
- o An older person, staff member or visitor tells you that they have observed abusive acts
- o You observe an action or inaction that may be considered abusive

Note: Don't dismiss what a person with dementia tells you as mere 'dementia talk'

### How to respond to an abusive situation

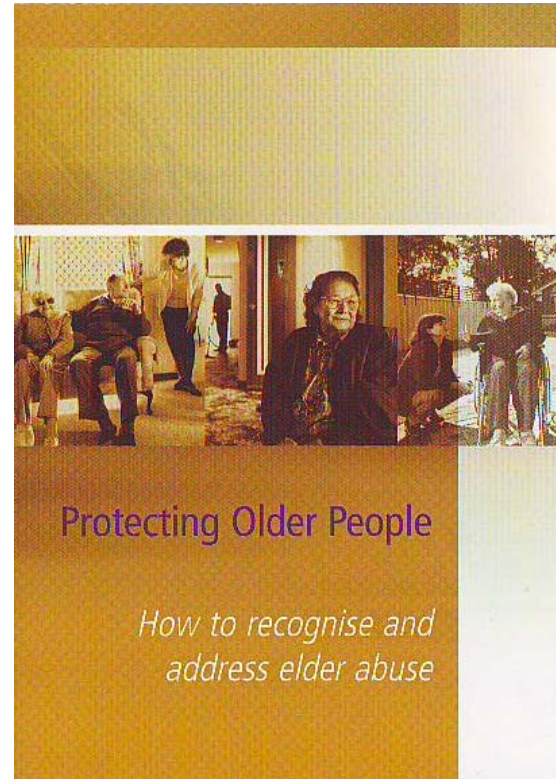
If there is an immediate threat to someone:

- o Remain calm
- o Consider whether you can safely take immediate action to stop the abuse occurring, without endangering the older person, yourself or other people
- o Alert other staff
- o Report to, or get someone else to contact your supervisor immediately
- o Reassure and comfort the person

After taking the necessary immediate action:

- o If a sexual assault has taken place ensure the older person does not wash or shower before medical or police officers attend the scene
- o Do not disturb the area or remove any items involved in the incident
- o Record your observations or discussions with (or about) the older person that might indicate abuse has occurred, or complete an incident form
- o Don't ask extra questions or investigate in any way - that's not your job
- o Tell your supervisor any additional changes or concerns that you think of later

# ACSA Brochure



# Responding to abuse:

## Policy and procedures for Supervisors/Managers

- Initial response
- Follow up
  - talk to, listen to and discuss their wishes
  - if person is competent/ not competent
  - determine if wishes may need to be over-ridden, if needs to be reported to external authority
  - seek advice eg from own manager, Guardianship Tribunal, ACAT, Sexual Assault Service etc
  - consider informal, formal, protective interventions
  - follow local/regional protocols
- Follow up with alleged abuser
  - if staff
  - if another resident
  - if family
  - if other

# Responding to abuse:

## Policy and procedures (cont)

### Other policies

- Safe home visiting
- Reporting requirements (community care clients)
  - changes in client condition, incidents in the home
  - how quickly
  - documentation: eg Diary, Fortnightly Reports, Communication Books
- Critical incident reporting and documentation
- Protection of staff who report abuse
- Support of staff
  - Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
  - Vicarious trauma

## Selected other resources

**South Australia** ARAS: Abuse Prevention Program

[www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/prevent](http://www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/prevent)

**Queensland** Elder Abuse Prevention Unit (EAPU)

[www.eapu.com.au](http://www.eapu.com.au)

Seniors Advocacy Information and Legal Service (SAILS)

[www.caxton.org.au/services](http://www.caxton.org.au/services)

**Western Australia** Advocare: Elder Abuse Prevention Program

[www.advocare.org.au](http://www.advocare.org.au)

**new** Rights Centre for Older People

Key reports: Mistreatment of Older People in Aboriginal Communities

Care and Respect: Elder Abuse in CALD communities

**ACT** Elder Abuse Information and Referral Service

**VIC** **new** Community Education and Older Person's Legal Service

# ANPEA

Australian Network  
for the Prevention  
of Elder Abuse

ANPEA



## Aims

- Act as a forum for sharing information about new developments, ideas in the identification, prevention and response to abuse
- Identify opportunities for improvements in policies, programs, training, community education
- Encourage research
- Contribute to INPEA

## Members

- Individuals or org'ns that support the goals and values of ANPEA

# ANPEA's priorities

- Rebuild the network
- Establish a website to be a source of reliable information and mechanism for sharing and disseminating information
- Hold an annual meeting\conference of the network as a national forum for discussion on progress
- Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2007 Adelaide
- Obtain funding!

The Benevolent Society

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