

# Protection and Advocacy

## 4 Defining and Identifying Neglect and Exploitation



# Introduction

These slides contain content adapted from the Administration for Community Living's Person Centered Counseling Training Program. The content includes text and narration from online courses. To view original content or for more information, please visit [nwd.acl.gov](http://nwd.acl.gov) or contact [NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov](mailto:NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov).

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# Welcome! (1/2)

While Lesson 3 focused on abuse, this lesson provides information on neglect and exploitation. As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, it is important to understand and be able to identify neglect and exploitation, two other forms of maltreatment. Any person can experience neglect and exploitation, regardless of age, disability, race, or sex. And any person can neglect or exploit someone including friends, family, paid providers, neighbors, and health or homecare professionals. Refer to Lesson 5: Reporting Abuse and other Legal Requirements for Mandated Reporters for more information on reporting and next steps if you suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

# Welcome! (2/2)

## Learning Objective

After completing this lesson: You will be able to define neglect and exploitation and provide at least three examples of each type of neglect and exploitation. You will also be able to identify some of the risk factors and signs of neglect and exploitation.

# What is Neglect? (1/2)

Neglect is a form of maltreatment (also known as mistreatment). In many instances, it is against the law. There are different definitions of neglect for children and adults, and these definitions also vary among states. As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, it's important that you're familiar with your own state's definitions for neglect, as well as those of your organization or agency.

# What is Neglect? (2/2)

There are many types of neglect, including financial neglect and abandonment. Abandonment is similar to neglect. According to the National Adult Protective Services Association, abandonment: “...involves deserting the caregiving needs of an individual while neglecting to arrange sufficient care and support for the duration of the absence.”

But in this lesson, we will focus specifically on the following three types of neglect:

- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Self-neglect

# Physical Neglect (1/4)

The physical neglect of a child is when a parent or guardian fails to meet a child's physical needs, such as providing shelter, food, and supervision. Concerning adults, the National Adult Protective Services Association describes physical neglect as: "... failing to attend to a person's medical, hygienic, nutrition, and dietary needs, such as dispensing medications, changing bandages, bathing, grooming, dressing, or failing to provide ample food to maintain health."

[source: National Adult Protective Services Association. (n.d.). What Is Neglect? Retrieved from <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/what-is-neglect/>]

## Physical Neglect (2/4)

Physical neglect is the neglect of a person's body and environment. This can happen to children and adults of all ages. Examples of physical neglect include the following:

- Depriving someone of food, water, or sleep. Malnutrition is one effect of physical neglect.
- Secluding or restraining someone so that they are left alone in a room and unable to interact, communicate, or move.
- Depriving someone of basic grooming and hygiene.



## Physical Neglect (3/4)

- Withholding access to medication, assistive devices (for example, wheelchairs, canes, hearing aids, eyeglasses, and communication devices), or other services or supports necessary for living.
- Depriving someone of shelter or safe living conditions, such as utilities, heat, water, and ventilation.

# Physical Neglect (4/4)

Physical neglect can lead to discomfort, disease, poor development, and even death. An adult who lives alone and shows signs of physical neglect may meet a definition of self-neglect. This means that they are no longer able to take care of themselves and may require additional services. You will learn more about self-neglect later in this lesson. Mandated reporters and others who are concerned about neglect or self-neglect should report it to the appropriate adult protection agency. You will learn more about mandated reporters in Lesson 5 of this course.

Please remember these are just general examples and definitions. Definitions of physical neglect will vary depending on the state, county, and agency where you work.

# Emotional Neglect (1/3)

For a child, emotional neglect can entail a parent or caregiver not attending to a child's emotional needs or failing to provide access to psychological care.

Additionally, the National Adult Protective Services Association defines emotional neglect as: "...causing emotional pain, distress or anguish by ignoring, belittling, or infantilizing the needs of adults. This includes neglecting or discounting the emotional well-being of others, as well as actions to isolate adults from visits or contact by family and friends."

[source: National Adult Protective Services Association. (n.d.). What Is Neglect? Retrieved from <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/what-is-neglect/>]

# Emotional Neglect (2/3)

A person needs to have safe, emotional connections with others to be healthy. Some examples of emotional neglect for both children and adults may include:

- Allowing a person to regularly witness abuse or harm to others, especially loved ones.
- Not responding to a person's emotional and social needs.
- Not allowing access to other people or relationships that provide physical and emotional affection.
- Not providing stimulating or engaging age-appropriate activities for a person.
- Verbally belittling, teasing, harassing, or threatening a person.
- Encouraging or allowing a person to engage in dangerous or illegal behavior, such as illicit drug use or underage drinking.
- Encouraging behavior that leads to being kicked out of a home or school.

# Emotional Neglect (3/3)

Please remember these are just general examples and definitions. Definitions of emotional neglect will vary by state, county, and agency. You should be familiar with your state and local definitions for neglect, as well as those of your agency.

# Self-Neglect (1/4)

Self-neglect happens when adults are fails to meet their own essential physical, psychological or social needs and are unable to take care of themselves. This can be true for adults of all ages with and without disabilities. According to the National Adult Protective Services Association, self-neglect: “...involves seniors or adults with disabilities who fail to meet their own essential physical, psychological or social needs, which threatens their health, safety, and well-being. This includes failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and health care for one’s own needs.”

[source: National Adult Protective Services Association. (n.d.). What Is Neglect? Retrieved from <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/what-is-neglect/>]

## Self-Neglect (2/4)

Self-neglect may occur when an adult lives in a situation that puts their safety, health, or well-being at risk. This can sometimes be difficult to identify, especially if a person seeking No Wrong Door (NWD) system services is self-directing and asserting choice, direction, and control.

As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, it's important for you to support people's lifestyle choices and the dignity of risk. At the same time, you should ensure that people seeking services have the tools, information, and resources to make safe decisions if they are engaging in behaviors that are risky or harmful to themselves or others. For someone with a cognitive impairment or intellectual or developmental disability, a supported decision-making approach can also help to ensure that risks are assessed regarding potentially harmful behaviors.

## Self-Neglect (3/4)

Also, it's important to keep in mind that some people may have different hygiene and lifestyle habits that on the surface might seem like self-neglect, but may not be. For example, if a woman from another culture or religion chooses to fast and not eat for three days every month, that is her lifestyle choice. If a woman doesn't eat regularly because she doesn't shop for groceries, doesn't know how to cook them, has an unsafe kitchen, or another person isn't allowing her to fix meals, then that might be a case of self-neglect. It could cause harm and put her safety, health, and well-being at risk.



## Self-Neglect (4/4)

Please remember these are just general definitions and examples of self-neglect. Definitions will vary by state, county, and agency, so make sure that you're familiar with the definitions where you work.

To learn more about self-neglect, go to the National Adult Protective Services Association: <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/other-safetyconcerns-2/>

# Risk Factors for and Signs of Neglect (1/3)

You have just learned about three different kinds of neglect: physical, emotional, and self-neglect. There are certain risk factors, such as having a developmental disability, that make it more likely that an adult will experience neglect. There are also other risk factors that might make a child more likely to experience neglect, as well as protective factors that can help to decrease the risk. Keep in mind that these are just risk factors, and their presence doesn't necessarily lead to child abuse or neglect.

# Risk Factors for and Signs of Neglect (2/3)

Some of the common factors that may put children more at risk for abuse or neglect include the following:

- Parent, guardian, or caregiver characteristics, such as being a substance abuser or being an unprepared parent.
- Age and disability characteristics, especially infants, young children, and children with disabilities whose need for constant care can overwhelm parents and caregivers.
- Family characteristics, such as household structure (for example, single-parent households) and the presence of domestic violence. This can lead to socially isolated parents or caregivers who do not have adequate emotional or financial support.

# Risk Factors for and Signs of Neglect (3/3)

- Environmental characteristics, including living in communities with low socioeconomic status and high rates of unemployment. Poverty can also increase the likelihood of maltreatment, especially when combined with other factors such as substance abuse and isolation.

As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, there are also some physical and behavioral signs of neglect that you should be familiar with so that you can more readily identify when either a child or an adult might be experiencing neglect. Just remember that the following are general signs of neglect and that each person's situation is unique and may be influenced by their culture or religion, among other factors.

# Exploitation (1/3)

Exploitation is a form of maltreatment that is different from abuse and neglect. Exploitation is the misuse of a person's money, goods, or body for the benefit of someone. Many states will have a unique definition for exploitation. In some states, some types of exploitation might even meet the definition of abuse or neglect. As with the definitions of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment, it's important that you're familiar with your state and local definitions of exploitation.

## Exploitation (2/3)

Financial exploitation is a common type of exploitation that involves the illegal or improper use of a person's property, assets, or money. According to the National Adult Protective Services Association, financial exploitation: "...occurs when a person misuses or takes the assets of a vulnerable adult for their own personal benefit. This frequently occurs without the explicit knowledge or consent of a senior or disabled adult, depriving them of vital financial resources for their personal needs."

[source: National Adult Protective Services Association. (n.d.). What Is Financial Exploitation? Retrieved from <http://www.napsa-now.org/get-informed/what-is-financial-exploitation/>]

## Exploitation (3/3)

As mentioned earlier in the lesson, anyone can exploit an individual. This includes a paid caregiver, lawyer, social worker, healthcare professional, family member, neighbor, or friend. Keep in mind that a person who exploits someone may also be abusive or neglectful.

For more information on financial exploitation, go to the Senior Law Resource Center: <http://www.senior-law.org/Home/resource/elder-exploitation-overview>

# — Signs of Exploitation (1/3)

You have just learned about exploitation and financial exploitation. The following are some signs of exploitation. As a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional, you should be familiar with them. Just keep in mind that the following are general signs of exploitation and that each person's situation is unique.



# — Signs of Exploitation (2/3)

Signs of exploitation, including financial exploitation:

- New acquaintances that suddenly have a lot of influence over the person.
- Allowing others (who are not their legal guardians) to make a majority of their decisions when previously they didn't allow others to do this.
- Doing things that they really don't want to do.
- A sudden decrease in the person's checking or savings account.
- Unpaid and overdue bills and other paperwork.
- Deeds and other documents that recently changed ownership.
- Signatures on documents that look forged and unlike the person's handwriting.

## — Signs of Exploitation (3/3)

- Unusual explanations for changes in the person's activities or finances.
- A sudden increase in spending and giving away of gifts and money.
- A sudden increase in trips to the ATM or bank machine.

# Identifying Possible Exploitation

There may be times in your work as a Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professional that someone you work with shows the signs of possible neglect or exploitation, which can be a very delicate matter to discuss.

# Conclusion and Lesson Review (1/2)

- Neglect results from a disregard for the needs of others and can include physical neglect, emotional neglect, or self-neglect.
- Exploitation is the misuse of a person's money, goods, or body for the benefit of someone other than the person.
- Financial exploitation is a common type of exploitation that involves the illegal or improper use of a person's property, assets, or money.
- Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals can benefit from understanding and identifying the various signs of potential neglect and exploitation, as well as the risk factors.

# Conclusion and Lesson Review (2/2)

## Learning Objective

After completing this lesson: You will be able to define neglect and exploitation and provide at least three examples of each type of neglect and exploitation. You will also be able to identify some of the risk factors and signs of neglect and exploitation.

## Reflection on Learning Objective

Directions: Review the objective(s) on this page. Write down your answers to the following questions.

1. What did you learn in this lesson that you felt was important?
2. What will you do differently because of the content in this lesson?