



Department of
Developmental Disabilities

Office of MUI/Registry Unit

John R. Kasich, Governor
John L. Martin, Director

Health & Safety Alert #32-10-11

Misappropriation

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The National Crime Victimization Survey notes there were 11.7 million cases of property theft in the United States in 2009. This means that nearly 100 households out of every 1000 experienced some kind of property theft.

The Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) collects misappropriation (theft) data through Major Unusual Incidents (MUI) reporting. This information is calculated by gathering incident specific data reported through the Incident Tracking System (ITS). In 2010 there were 961 substantiated theft allegations involving individuals with Developmental Disabilities in Ohio. Allegations of theft made up nearly 10% of the total number of MUI's reported. In 50% of the substantiated cases the alleged perpetrators were unknown.

It is critical that the field of developmental disabilities take a comprehensive look at fiscal management systems to assure individual protections.

The following Health and Safety Alert has been developed to provide information to Individuals, Families, County Boards and Providers in an effort to reduce the number of theft allegations within our support system.

Personal Property Theft:

Theft of property continues to be a significant concern in Ohio. Based on (ITS) data reviewed for calendar year 2010 the following items are most likely to be stolen from an individual with a disability (Cash 60%, Electronics 20%, Food /Groceries/Supplies 10%, Medications 5% and Clothing / other items 5 %.)

It is clear when reviewing data that the cash on hand within an individual's home is the most susceptible to theft. A review of incidents reported throughout Ohio indicates that

Division of Legal & Oversight (800) 617-6733 (Phone)
1800 Sullivant Avenue (614) 995-3822 (Fax)
Columbus, Ohio 43223-1239 (866) 313-6733 (Hotline)
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security of money, checks, credit /debit and ATM cards is a concern. In an effort to combat these thefts tracking systems need to be in place for securing individual funds. Reconciliation of accounts on a routine basis to assure that balances are accurate is critical. Tracking who has access to funds is important in identifying who may have been responsible for the theft. The incidents throughout the state where the department has seen large sums of money stolen involve a failure to reconcile accounts on a routine basis. Many of the incidents have involved a manager who was responsible for verifying accounts who either didn't do so or was actually implicated in the theft itself. Providers of service should assure that oversight is being provided at all levels within the organization.

Individual's personal items are also being stolen and must be protected. Data indicates that electronics seem to be taken at higher rates than any other personal items. TV's, DVD players, cell phones, computers and video games are at the top of the list for items likely to be stolen. These items should be inventoried and tracked carefully in order to protect individual's property.

Identity Theft:

Identity Theft is the most common type of fraud as reported by the Federal Trade Commission. Identity theft involves criminals stealing personally identifying information in order to commit a multitude of crimes. Opening credit card accounts, establishing utilities, and withdrawing cash from ATM accounts are all examples of identity theft that has been reported in 2010. According to a 2010 Javelin Report Identity Theft in the United States totaled 54 billion dollars in losses in 2009. This is clearly a problem that can impact anyone and all citizens should pay very close attention to.

Protecting individual's personal private information is the only way to reduce identity theft over time. Individuals with developmental disabilities require assistance from care givers to take care of many of their day to day needs. As a result, personal and private information is available and accessible to many people. Social Security numbers, birth certificates, checking and saving account numbers, Personal Identification Numbers (PIN's) etc...are all key pieces of information that must be protected. Care givers must understand the importance of the responsibility to protect this very valuable information. Failure to do so can have a devastating impact.

Medication Theft:

Theft of medications including narcotics and psychotropics continue to be an issue of concern for individuals with developmental disabilities. Establishing a sound system for monitoring medications is the best step to avoid theft of medications. Storing medications in a safe and secure manner, reviewing the MAR's routinely to assure that medications

are being delivered as required, monitoring medication passes in an effort to assess the skills of the provider of service as well as assure appropriate medication distribution. Avoid overstocking any medications as this causes a much greater risk of theft.

Education:

Education regarding theft issues is very important to positive outcomes for individuals in Ohio. Training regarding what to report and how to report is an integral piece of the puzzle when attempting to effect positive change. Making sure that everyone understands that sharing private information with someone you really don't know is very dangerous and can result in potential theft. Individuals should always have access to local law enforcement contacts, county board Investigative Agents, county board SSA's and the departments hotline number. Ohio has a very responsive health and safety system but it requires accurate and timely reporting to actively protect individuals.

Summary

- 1.) Secure cash appropriately and reconcile accounts routinely to make sure expenses are tracked appropriately and balances are accurate.
- 2.) Protect individual's personal / private information to avoid identity theft. Avoid allowing too many people access to personal private information within the ISP. Assure that a shredder is available to appropriately discard personal / private information.
- 3.) Inventory and track larger, more expensive items like electronics and furniture to protect individual's property.
- 4.) Store medications securely and safely. Monitor the distributions of medications via the MAR or actual medication administration observation. Avoid overstocking any medications.
- 5.) Assist individuals to protect themselves. Provide education and training regarding the dangers of sharing information with strangers, inviting strangers into your home and lending money to people you really don't know. Teach skills to protect individual's personal and private information. Make sure that individuals know how to report a potential theft. Assure access to appropriate phone numbers (local law enforcement, county board SSA, county board investigative agent and the department of developmental disabilities hotline number.)
- 6.) Provide training to all providers of service reminding them of the importance of protecting individual's finances and property. Reminders through training should

include the fact that theft from a disabled individual is elevated to a felony offense and can also result in placement on the State of Ohio's Abuser Registry.

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