

## Purpose

The purpose of this Alert is to provide critical information to caregivers on physical abuse prevention. People with developmental disabilities are at a high risk for physical abuse because they need physical assistance and support. Those providing care can help reduce risks, report allegations timely, and ensure all at risk are safe. This Alert will provide some signs that may indicate a person is being abused and what you can do to help.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents and Unusual Incidents prior to unsupervised contact. This training includes the review of any **Health and Welfare Alerts** released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions / comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

*Persons with disabilities were three times more likely to be a victim of violent crime than the general population according to the Crimes against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2013 (Summary May 2015) published by the U.S. Department of Justice.*

The MUI Rule (O.A.C 5123:2-17-02) defines "Physical abuse" as the use of physical force that can reasonably be expected to result in physical harm or serious physical harm as those terms are defined in section 2901.01 of the Revised Code. Such force may include, but is not limited to, hitting, slapping, pushing, or throwing objects at an individual.

Last year, there were 1,484 reported allegations of physical abuse. Of those allegations, 391 (26%) were substantiated based on a preponderance level (it was more likely than not that abuse occurred). Fortunately, in 34% of the incidents, the individuals suffered no injuries and in 47% of the incidents, there was minor injury. Moderate and serious injuries comprised 19% of abuse related injuries.

Those responsible for the abuse were paid providers (25%); family members (33%); unknown attacker (14%); friends (10%) and other known acquaintances (18%).

Individuals with a developmental disability are at greater risk for abuse because they depend on others for physical assistance and support. Services are often provided in isolation or where oversight is limited.



*At first, the individual may not understand what is happening and may have a hard time making others understand that they have been abused. That is why timely reporting of suspected abuse is so important.* At times, allegations can be difficult to prove when there are no physical injuries and the victim has problems communicating what occurred. However, others around that individual may notice signs and can help stop the abuse!

## Know the signs of abuse

*How can you tell if someone is being abused?*

- The person may become depressed;
- Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes;
- Other untreated injuries;
- The victim may act very upset (aggressive) for a long time;
- Lose skills or confidence;
- Change in behavior or mood;
- Seem frightened of certain people or situations;
- Sudden onset of psychosomatic complaints (males most frequently complain of stomach aches while females most frequently report headaches);
- Problems at work;
- Not wanting to talk to anyone;
- Refuse to go places where the abuser is (home, work, family visit); and
- Sudden difficulty walking or sitting.

## Steps to take for suspected/alleged abuse

- Get the individual appropriate medical attention;
- Take immediate action to protect the person from further assault;
- Report immediately to law enforcement or CSB;
- Report to the County Board immediately but within 4 hours;
- Remember NOT to infer blame on the victim;
- Emotionally support the alleged victim;
- Remember to refer the individual for counseling and victim's assistance as appropriate;
- Notify DODD MUI Unit if the alleged PPI is a County Board Employee;
- The law says certain people **MUST** make a report if they have good reason to believe that abuse or neglect has happened; this is called mandated reporting. They include: DD personnel, doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers, mental health professionals, counselors, social workers, teachers and others.



## What can you do in your community to support individuals with disabilities and make a safer community?

- Provide ongoing *training and discussions with self-advocates on how to report abuse.*
- *Create a Disability Response Team.* These multiple disciplinary teams from the disability and criminal justice fields share expertise; provide training and act as a resource to the community.
- *Ensure that local Law Enforcement receive specific training and support in order to protect and serve individuals with developmental disabilities.*
- *Raise awareness with families, nurses, doctors, providers, school staff, and first responders about identifying abuse and supporting the victim.*
- *Ensure that your community has trained medical personnel that can assess, treat and document signs of abuse. i.e. Sexual Assault Nurses.*
- *Work with community leaders, Victim's Advocates, Prosecutors and others to ensure that victims are being treated fairly and that their story is told.*

Fact sheets and other resources are available at The Arc website at <http://www.thearc.org/NCCID/publications>

## Physical Abuse Prevention:

1. Screen your employees prior to hiring. Check references and any gaps in employment. Be sure to follow all background check requirements.
2. Post numbers to call for help. Make sure everyone (staff, individuals, and families) know who to call to get help.
3. Observe how employees interact. Ongoing training and communication is important. Talk about the expectations about how people should be treated using the Positive Culture Initiative as a guide.
4. Visit all places individuals are receiving services.
5. Ensure staff are given tools to do their job
6. Be mindful of staff who are working excessive hours and the impact it may have on their work.
7. As a supervisor, do unannounced visits. Welcome family and friends to do the same if agreeable to individual.
8. Promote and expect respectful interactions between staff and those served.

## More Info

For further assistance regarding Abuse Prevention, please contact:

DODD Easy Read Guide to Abuse  
[See the newest Easy Read Guides](#)

Report Child Abuse-JFS  
1-855-642-4453

Long Term Care  
Ombudsman  
1-800-266-4346  
[www.aging.ohio.gov](http://www.aging.ohio.gov)

Dept. of Justice  
[http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0913st\\_sum.pdf](http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0913st_sum.pdf)

Prevent Child Abuse  
America  
<http://www.preventchildabuse.org/index.php>

National Center on Elder  
Abuse  
<http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/>

The Arc  
<http://www.thearc.org/what-we-do/resources/fact-sheets/abuse>

## For Questions or Comments

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