

2.41 Elder Abuse Policy

Version	1	Last Updated	08/12/2016
Drafted by	CoM / General Manager	Approved by CoM on	08/12/2016
Responsible Persons		Scheduled Review Date	

Related Policies / Procedures: 2.14 Advocacy Policy and Procedure, 2.14.1 Advocacy Information, 2.15 Duty of Care, 2.15.1 A Breach of Duty of Care, 2.17 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Interpreter Policy, 4.1 Clients Rights Policy and Procedure, 4.1.1 Client's Right and Responsibilities

Principle

During the course of their activities, staff, volunteers or clients may identify an instance of where elder abuse may be occurring. Any suspicion that this may be occurring should be immediately reported to the SPDL management who will take the necessary steps to confirm the situation and attend to appropriate actions to support the effected person. The purpose of this policy and procedure is to:

- Ensure that appropriate action is taken in cases of elder abuse or suspected elder abuse
- Maintain the dignity and safety of older people utilizing SPDL services
- Achieve a pro-active approach to the management of elder abuse, while respecting the rights of older people to make their own decisions

Policy

SPDL will address suspected cases of elder abuse in accordance with 'With Respect to Age - 2009: Victorian Government guidelines for Health Services and Community Agencies for the Prevention of Elder Abuse'. Refer to www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/publications/respect/index.htm#download

1. The definition of Elder Abuse is *"any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person"*. (See 'With Respect to Age – 2009')
2. Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust. The abuser may be a:
 - son or daughter
 - grandchild
 - partner
 - other family member
 - friend
 - neighbour

- service provider
3. Elder abuse can take various forms. Often more than one type of abuse can be evident.
 - Emotional (or psychological) abuse: Using threats, humiliation or harassment causing distress and feelings of shame, stress or powerlessness. It often occurs in combination with other forms of abuse.
 - Neglect: Failing to provide the basic necessities of life, either intentionally or unintentionally.
 - Financial abuse: Using someone's money, property or other assets illegally or improperly or forcing someone to change their will or sign documents. This is the most common form of abuse seen at Seniors Rights Victoria.
 - Physical abuse: Inflicting pain or injury by hitting, slapping, pushing or using restraints.
 - Social abuse: Forcing someone to become isolated by restricting their access to others including family, friends or services. This can be used to prevent others from finding out about the abuse.
 - Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity for which the person has not consented.
 4. Abuse can be unintentional or deliberate. The harm caused to an older person may range from the unintended effects of poor care through to serious physical injury inflicted deliberately. Harm can also include emotional harm and financial loss including the loss of a home and belongings.
 5. The following are the key principles underpinning the implementation of the Victorian Government Elder Abuse Prevention Strategy.
 - Competence – All adults are considered competent to make informed decisions unless demonstrated otherwise.
 - Self Determination – With appropriate information and support, individuals should be encouraged to make their decisions.
 - Appropriate Protection – Where a person is not competent to make their own decisions it may be necessary to appoint a guardian or administrator. If a person is represented, their wishes should still be taken into account as far as possible.
 - Best Interests – The interests of an older person's safety and wellbeing are paramount. Even when they are unable to make decisions themselves, their views should be taken into account as far as possible.
 - Importance of Relationships – All responses to allegations of abuse should be respectful of the existing relationships that are considered important to an older person.
 - Collaborative Responses – Effective prevention and response requires a collaborative approach which recognizes the complexity of the issue and the skills and experience of appropriate services.
 - Community Responsibility – The most effective response is achieved when agencies work collaboratively and in partnership with the community.
 - Cultural Diversity – Needs to be considered.
 6. Additionally SPDL owes a duty of care to all clients of its services. This also applies in regard to Elder Abuse. Please refer to Policy 2.15 Duty of Care and 2.15.1 A Breach of Duty of Care.

Procedure

1. Staff and volunteers should report any suspicion of abuse to the Volunteer Program Coordinator or Transport Coordinator. This should be documented using the Feedback Form. The General Manager must also be informed.
2. All reported events will be responded to as a matter of the highest priority and urgency.
3. The General Manager should ensure that all evidence is gathered and documented to allow for referral to an appropriate authority. In the case of an emergency situation which poses an immediate threat to human life or a serious risk of physical harm then emergency action may need to be taken. Due to the nature of the services that SPDL provide it does not have the internal expert capabilities or resources to respond directly with a client in relation to suspicion of elder abuse.
4. The General Manager will confer with the Chair of the Committee of Management and in their absence the Deputy Chair. Consideration of the following actions will be assessed depending upon the situation at hand.
 - a. Where immediate need arises, calling emergency services eg ambulance or police
 - b. Referral to medical treatment e.g. local doctor or community health service i.e. ISCH
 - c. Referral to CoPP Access and Ageing Department for action
 - d. Referral to Senior Rights Victoria for assistance and direction. This group can also provide emergency advice and assistance.
5. If there is any doubt in relation to the action that should be taken or regarding the circumstances of the suspected abuse the General Manager will consult with Senior Rights Victoria for guidance. (www.seniorrights.org.au)
6. It is important that support is provided with an understanding of the cultural background of the person and this may necessitate the use of an interpreter service. Please refer to the designated SPDL Interpreter Service and 2.17 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Interpreter Policy.
7. Where possible appropriate discussions regarding concerns about elder abuse should occur with the older person and permission gained from them to take action or referral to other agencies. Exceptions exist in cases where emergency responses are called for, or where self neglect is leading to serious ill health or safety issues.
8. The actions taken for each reported incident should be fully documented and any handover to other authorities should also be documented.
9. Monitoring of the situation should occur within the scope of the service provided by SPDL, and if necessary further actions should be taken.