

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

By Cheryl Wiker and Karen Bone

Most senior citizens and dependent adults with disabilities live independently without assistance, however, some face abuse or neglect by others and need trained professionals to advocate on their behalf. Others may simply be struggling with daily care activities and benefit from In-Home Support Services to maintain their health and independence. Adult Protective Services helps by assessing each individual's unique needs, evaluating client risk and capacity to agree to services; arranging for a large variety of services and linking with community resources to maintain his/her safety, health, and independence. The program is designed to enable an elderly individual or other vulnerable adult to continue living independently at home and to protect him from abuse.

Mission: To assist elderly and dependent adults to maintain their health and safety in the community in the least restrictive environment.

The APS Program: The Adult Protective Services program (APS), is part of the Placer County Health and Human Services, Adult System of Care Division. APS is mandated by law to investigate reports of abuse, make contact with the alleged victim, offer services, and intervene when appropriate and necessary.

Who Do We Serve: Clients that are age 65 and older (Elder) and Clients between the ages of 18 to 64, whose physical or mental limitations restrict their ability to carry out normal activities or to protect their rights: including persons with physical or developmental disabilities or whose physical or mental abilities have been diminished by age (Dependent Adult).

Types of Abuse:

Physical: Physical abuse or bodily harm can range from bruises and scratches to death. It is also from the misuse of prescribed medications or the misuse of restraints. Victims may not be locked in rooms, tied down, overmedicated or under medicated. Only a physician can write a prescript for restraints, and all medications should be taken as prescribed by a physician.

Neglect: Failure of a caregiver to provide basic needs such as food, water, personal care, shelter, medical care, and prescribed medications.

Abduction: Forcible holds or detention (or any other means of instilling fear) of an elder or dependent adult whereby he/she is moved to another location against his/her will.

Abandonment: Desertion by a person who has assumed responsibility for providing care for an elder or dependent adult.

Sexual: Sexual abuse encompasses unwanted sexual advances; including assaultive behavior, coercion, or intimidation.

Financial: Financial abuse is using the elder's money or assets contrary to the elder's wishes, needs, or best interest—or for the abuser's personal gain. This could include theft or misuse of money and credit cards, or forcing an elder/dependent adult to sign documents.

Isolation: False imprisonment. Preventing an elder or dependent adult from receiving mail, phone calls, or having contact with family, friends, or concerned persons.

Self-Neglect: Failure of an elder or dependent adult to provide for his/her own basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, personal care, medical care, finances, and personal safety.

Reporting the Abuse

Who Makes a Report? A family member, neighbor, friend, or anyone concerned about the health and safety of an elder or dependent adult. Mandated Reporters such as: health practitioners, paid or unpaid caregivers, clergy, law enforcement, financial institutions, or APS. Mandated reporters must also submit a written report within two (2) days. The report form can be obtained by calling (916) 787-8860 or toll free (888) 886-5401.

What to Report: Observation or suspicion of physical/sexual abuse, neglect, financial abuse, abduction, abandonment, isolation, and self-neglect. The elder adult or dependent adult could also report abuse by stating that he/she has experienced abuse.

How to Report: Call the Placer County Adult Intake line 24hours / 7 days a week: (916) 787-8860 or toll free at 1-888-886-5401. To report abuse in all Long-Term care Facilities, call the Ombudsmen Services of Northern California at (530) 823-8422.

What if you just have a “feeling” about a situation but can't verify the details? APS workers are professional social workers trained to handle just such a situation. Based on your report, the agency will assess the situation and determine how best to respond.

The views expressed here are those of Ms. Cheryl Wiker and Ms. Karen Bone, and do not necessarily represent those of the Commission or individual members.