
Types of Abuse and Its Indicators

Community support workers have job specifications that they must work within to be in line with organisation policy and procedures, and to be responsible in their duty of care to their clients. If a client's emotional wellbeing falls outside the scope of their job role, workers must seek support from an appropriate staff member such as a Registered Nurse (RN), the client's case manager or the worker's supervisor. Even if a task or situation falls within the scope of the worker's job role, they must still seek clarification and guidance from an appropriate other if the task/situation is outside their own knowledge or skills. Staff training might be required in such circumstances.

Situations where a worker should seek support might include situations where the client's emotional wellbeing has varied, because in such situations the client is likely to need changes made to their case management, and the possible intervention of professional counsellors or medical practitioners. As referral is not one of the roles of a community services support worker, any identification of variation to a client's emotional wellbeing must be reported to an appropriate person such as a supervisor.

Variations to a client's wellbeing are often manifested as stress reactions. Stress levels can rise rapidly, without people noticing that it is happening, until their physical and mental health has deteriorated to such a point that recovery is far more difficult. At times of stress, the person might get a sudden surge of the hormones adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol into their bloodstream, giving rise to feelings of panic, fear, and anxiety.

Physical

Indicators of physical abuse include: facial, head and neck bruising or injuries drowsiness, vomiting, fits (associated with head injuries) unexplained or poorly explained injury other bruising and marks may suggest the shape of the object that caused it bite marks or scratches unexplained burns or scalds unexplained fractures, dislocations, sprains explanation inconsistent with the injury; explanation varies avoidance or fearfulness of a particular person or staff member sleep disturbance (eg nightmares; bedwetting) changes in behaviour: out of character aggression; withdrawal; excessive compliance.

Sexual

Sexual abuse is any sexual contact between an adult and child sixteen years of age and

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younger, or any sexual activity with an adult who lacks the capacity to give or withhold consent, or is threatened, coerced or forced to engage in sexual behaviour. It includes non-consensual sexual contact, language or exploitative behaviour and can take the form of rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment or sexual interference in any form.

Indicators of sexual abuse include: repeated use of words such as bad; or dirty direct or indirect disclosure sexual act described by client self-destructive behaviour, self-mutilation trauma to the breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs sudden changes in behaviour or temperament (e. g. depression, anxiety attacks and crying, sweating, trembling; withdrawal, agitation, anger, violence, absconding, seeking comfort and security) difficulty in walking or sitting injuries (e. g. tears or bruising), pain or itching to genitalia, anus or perineal region torn, stained or blood stained underwear or bedclothes inappropriate advances to others sleep disturbances, refusing to go to bed, going to bed fully clothed sexually transmitted diseases unexplained accumulation of money or gifts eating disorders refusing to shower or constant showering changes in social patterns, refusing to attend usual places (work, respite) excessive compliance.

Psych

Symptoms of depression include: feeling sad, 'down' or crying every day reduction or loss of interest or pleasure in things and people significant weight/ appetite gain or loss sleep disturbance; insomnia or sleeping too much agitation and anxiety or sluggishness fatigue and loss of energy feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt finding it hard to concentrate and difficult to make decisions; even over small thing irritability and anger recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal thoughts.

Financial

Indicators of financial abuse include: restricted access to or no control over personal funds or bank accounts stealing from others borrowing money no records or incomplete records kept of expenditure and purchases begging missing money, valuables or property forced changes to wills or other legal documents sudden transfer of assets (money) disappearance of possessions unexplained or unusual use of bank cards unpaid bills forged signature on cheques misuse of electronic benefits transfer card.

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