

**Guideline  
for  
elder abuse and neglect**



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## Limitations

The Clinical Practice Guideline Committee (CPGC) provides this product for the educational benefit of the contracted practitioners of Fallon Community Health Plan. **This document is a guideline, and is not meant to replace any practices based on clinical judgment, experience or specific aspects of individual patient situations.**

## Goals

- Provide effective and efficient screening criteria for all elderly patients.
- Accurate identification and reporting of elder abuse and neglect.

## Timetable

Date final draft approved by Clinical Practice Guidelines Committee: September 14, 2011  
Dissemination to FCHP practitioners: November 2011

## Elder abuse and neglect

A growing need exists to assist practitioners to assess elder abuse or mistreatment. Rather than relying on specific screening tools, this guideline is provided to raise awareness of elder abuse for clinicians.

<b>Types of elder abuse</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Willful infliction of physical pain or injury or unnecessary restraint.	Unexplained bruising, wounds or welts, cigarette burns or other injuries including fractures or sprains. Delays between injury or illness and assessment.	Slapping, hitting, kicking, force-feeding, restraint, striking with objects.
<b>Psychological</b>	Willful infliction of emotional harm or mental anguish.	Sense of resignation or hopelessness: passive, helpless, withdrawn behavior: anxious, trembling, fearful behavior.	Verbal aggression or threat, threats of institutionalization, social isolation, humiliating statements.
<b>Sexual</b>	Willful nonconsensual sexual contact.	Consider evidence of sexual trauma or sexually transmitted diseases found on examination.	Sexual suggestive talk, forced sexual activity, touching, fondling with a non-consenting competent or incompetent person.
<b>Financial exploitation</b>	Theft, fraud, misuse or neglect of authority, and use of undue influence as a lever to gain control over an older person's money or property.	Unexplained change in Power of Attorney, wills or legal documents.	Theft of checks or money, coercion to deprive the elder of his or her assets such as forcible transfer of property.
<b>Neglect by others or self</b>	Failure by caregiver or self to provide for safety, physical or emotional needs.	Unclean appearance, underweight, frail, dehydration. Unpaid bills, threats to disconnect utilities, (i.e., electricity, phone, water, heating).	Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, hygiene or social stimulation.
<b>Abandonment</b>	Desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone with a duty of care.	Evidence that a caretaker has withdrawn care precipitously.	

## Risk factors of elder abuse

Domain	Risk factor
Individual characteristics	Advanced age (over 70) Gender (women)
Physical and emotional health	Behavioral health disorder Impaired cognitive function Impaired function (difficulty with activities of daily living) Chronic disease Increasing care needs
Social factors	Isolation Dependency on caregiver Potentially abusive or exploitative caregivers
Economic factors	Evidence of financial exploitation

## Reporting elder abuse

Elder abuse reports may be made to the appropriate designated public service agency or the statewide Elder Abuse Hotline. Anyone can make an elder abuse report. However, the law requires certain professionals to report suspected incidents of abuse. Mandated reporters who fail to make elder abuse reports when appropriate are subject to a fine up to \$1,000. In addition, the law provides mandated reporters with immunity from any civil or criminal liability that otherwise could result from making a report, provided the reporter did not commit the abuse. Persons who are not mandated reporters have the same immunity, as long as they make a report in good faith.

To report suspected elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation	
Massachusetts	1-800-922-2275 For more information: <a href="http://www.mass.gov">http://www.mass.gov</a>
Connecticut	1-888-385-4225
New Hampshire	1-800-949-0470
Rhode Island	1-401-462-0555

## Bibliography

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4. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: Assessing Elder Mistreatment: Instrument development and implications for adult protective services. Journal of Gerontological Social Work 2009; 52:815-836.
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