

Policy Response Guideline

This response guideline is aligned to the Preventing and responding to abuse of older people, NSW Interagency Policy 2015 (*NSW Interagency Policy*).

All agencies are encouraged to develop or align existing policies and protocols to the NSW policy. The following guideline supports a consistent approach to identify, respond and prevent the abuse of older people.

The guideline contains:

- Five step approach
- Flow chart

Aim

The aim of the guideline is to provide a general process to all agencies that have staff, including volunteers in a job role where the abuse of an older person may be disclosed, witnessed or suspected. The guideline outlines general processes for the identification and response of the abuse of older people.

The steps and responsibilities will vary across job roles.

Supervisors and managers play a critical part in supporting and protecting staff who report abuse, by:

- Ensuring all steps are followed.
- Providing ongoing training for staff.

Staff should act in accordance with their job role and own policy and protocols in determining actions to support the older person: discussing options with the older person, making referrals and implementation of this response guideline.

For concerns about an older person's capacity to provide consent staff should seek advice from their manager. In NSW a range of people in the community are recognised as having responsibility to undertake an assessment of a person's capacity.

Further information can be obtained from:

- NSW interagency policy and tools.
- Capacity Toolkit: Attorney General's Department (NSW Government, Law link, Police and Justice), June 2008.
- NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit:

1800 628 221

THE FIVE STEP APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE OF OLDER PEOPLE

STEP 1: IDENTIFY ABUSE (suspected, witnessed or disclosed)

- If abuse is witnessed or disclosed using open and direct questioning techniques can help workers gain further information about the abuse. Go to step 2.
- If abuse is suspected further information must be gathered. This can be achieved by understanding the risk factors for abuse, determining the likelihood that abuse is occurring based on identified risk factors and indicators, any past reports of abuse and discussion with your manager.

STEP 2: ASSESS IMMEDIATE SAFETY

- If the older person or worker is in immediate danger and/or at risk of serious harm, staff should immediately contact the police, ambulance or other emergency service and then contact their manager. Consent of the older person is not necessary in these situations.
- Do not engage the alleged abuser.
- Protect evidence.
- For abuse situations that are not an emergency, continue to step 3.

STEP 3: PROVIDE SUPPORT

- Listen to the older person, validating their experience and acknowledging what they tell you.
- Advise the older person of your concerns.
- Ask the older person what they want to do about their situation.
- Provide information about agencies that can support the older person and educate them about these choices.

Note: Engage a professional interpreter or cultural advisor if necessary.

STEP 4: INFORM MANAGER AND DOCUMENT

- Always report suspected, actual or disclosed abuse to the manager or supervisor to seek advice and support.
- Document the abuse and action/s taken following your own agency policy and protocols.

STEP 5: RESPOND & REFER

- Based on what the older person wants to do about their situation, support the older person in making appropriate referrals e.g. health and allied health, General Practitioner, specialist medical staff, family support services, home and community care services, respite services, mental health services, advocacy services, legal services, community justice, police and trustee and guardian services or the tribunal.
- Seek consent from the older person or appropriate substitute decision maker to make a referral.
- Consider a case conference, family conference and identify the lead agency.
- Implement any local or regional protocols, interagency protocols and service coordination plans.
- Monitor and follow up.

Notes:

- If the older person refuses assistance, leave information, if safe to do so, keeping the lines of communication open should they change their mind. Document non consent.
- Where the older person has impaired capacity, discuss the options with the appropriate substitute decision maker. Where appropriate, refer the matter to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (Guardianship Division).
- For additional support and information contact the **NSW Elder Abuse Helpline and Resource Unit. 1800 628 221 - Anyone can make the call.**

Flow Chart: Responding to the abuse of older people

