

PATHWAYS ABILITIES SOCIETY

POLICY: ABUSE

Applies to: All Personnel, Volunteers, Persons Served and Visitors

PREAMBLE

Every individual has the right to a physically and psychologically safe environment. Pathways Abilities Society is committed to protecting the individuals served and to ensuring the health, safety and well being of all people with disabilities.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Define what constitutes abuse.
- Explain how staff can help prevent abuse.
- Explain the procedure for reporting and investigating abuse.

Definitions of Abuse:

Emotional Abuse: Any act which reduces a person's sense of identity, dignity, self worth and well being, by persons not receiving services. This includes humiliation, exploitation, degradation, confinement, isolation, intimidation, excessive and repeated demands and derogatory or demeaning language directed toward an individual.

Financial Abuse/Exploitation: The misuse of a person receiving service's funds or assets, obtaining the person's property or funds without the person's or his/her guardian's knowledge and full consent, or in the case of persons not capable of managing their financial affairs, not in their best interests, by a person not receiving services.

Neglect: Means failure, by persons not receiving services, to supply the necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care (including medication), or appropriate supervision of an individual.

Physical Abuse: Physical force that is in excess or is inappropriate to the situation involving a person receiving service and perpetuated by persons not receiving services.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual behaviour directed towards a person receiving services by a staff member or volunteer in a position of trust or authority and/or any individual receiving services. This definition does not apply to consenting sexual behaviour between an adult receiving service and other adult receiving services.

Verbal/Emotional Abuse: Infliction of emotional injury by one or more instances of yelling, scaring, threatening, and belittling. This may include use of silence, isolation, improper use of restraints. Where behavioural techniques are used, failure to comply with approved guidelines also constitutes abuse.

Potential signs of abuse:

- Has a history of repeated injuries,

- Has an injury which cannot be explained or there seems to be a rehearsed explanation for the injury,
- Has new and old injuries, frequently untreated,
- Is suspected of having been given inappropriate food, drug or drink,
- Is usually fearful,
- Suffers from malnutrition,
- Has their health or hygiene needs apparently ignored,
- Is denied social relationships and personal needs due to extraordinary demands placed upon the individual,
- Appears to have no money or personal items.

Prevention

All staff has a role to play in preventing abuse and should be aware of the following:

- Persons may not be aware that what they are doing constitutes abuse and a word of advice may be all that is required to prevent recurrence.
- Certain persons can be described as being "at risk" in that they may be under pressure due to domestic and/or other problems and may take out their frustration on others.
- At the first sign of potentially abusive actions, discuss the situation with your immediate supervisor who can intervene before this behaviour deteriorates and puts the individual at risk and potentially a staff's job in jeopardy.
- Persons may become momentarily angry when dealing with a difficult situation and may lose control of the situation. Assist the person to remove themselves from the situation and prevent it from escalating.

A need for a person to feel they are in control and must remain in control may lead the person to resort to abusive tactics. Supervisory and other professional staff is available for help and to provide guidance in this regard.

POLICY

Abuse is strictly forbidden; either as Pathways Abilities Society policy or by law. Suspected abuse must be reported immediately as outlined in the procedures. Persons found guilty of abuse are subject to discipline and/or the legal consequences of their act(s).

An alleged offender is typically someone other than another individual receiving service. A separate policy, Behavioural Support and Intervention Guidelines has been developed to support individual's behaviours. However depending on the nature of the allegation, all or part of the policy and the procedure may be applied.

Staff, volunteers and supported individuals must report any sign or indication of possible abuse. Staff, volunteers and supported individuals must not take any steps to diagnose a situation or to imply responsibility. Their responsibility is to report their concerns using the Abuse procedures. Failure of an employee or volunteer to report an incident or suspicion of mistreatment is cause for disciplinary action. If unsure if an incident constitutes abuse, discuss with the supervisor or designate.

All abuse allegations will be reported to the appropriate agencies as stated in our contractual requirements. Pathways will ask the agency involved whether the supported

individual should be asked if they want a family member or advocate contacted who can support the individual through the process. If the individual wants a family member or advocate, Pathways will contact the person of their choice.

Pathways Abilities Society adheres to all applicable provincial and federal legislation.

All abuse allegations will be investigated. All recommendations resulting from an abuse investigation will be implemented.

Retaliation (taking action) against any person making a good faith complaint under this policy or retaliation against witnesses assisting in an investigation of a complaint is expressly prohibited. Actions, including disciplinary, will be taken against any person engaging in any form of retaliation.

All information pertaining to the allegation and subsequent investigation will remain confidential and will only be released as required by our contractual and legal obligations.

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