

This is the first in a series of postings regarding preventing and reducing abuse and/or neglect of individuals with intellectual disability. The postings are accompanied by a story told by and from the perspective of a self-advocate. The information presented in the postings is part of DDS' involvement in the IMPACT/Ability Project, a project of Project Triangle funded through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Please look for additional information posted on a quarterly basis.

POSTING #1- July, 2012

What is a Mandated Reporter and am I obligated to report ?

A mandated reporter is a person who because of their job is more likely to be aware of abuse and/or neglect. A mandated reporter is required to report cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect to DPPC. As a staff person, you are a mandated reporter.

This means that you need only have a mere suspicion that abuse or neglect was committed in order to report to DPPC.

There are many reasons why you may find it difficult to report a suspected instance of abuse and/or neglect including but not limited to:

- Being scared of retaliation by a co-worker
- The alleged abuser may be a friend and co-worker
- Being scared to break the "code of silence" among co-workers.
- Not being sure of what you observed

Do I have to call DPPC if I am not convinced of the truthfulness of the information that I have received?

If an individual reports abuse or neglect to you , you must report . Others will investigate

REMEMBER: Your first responsibility is to the individual who is counting on you to be their advocate, not to your co-worker or friend!

Recognizing and Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Individuals with a disability are more likely to be abused or neglected than the general population. At the same time, individuals with intellectual disability are often dependent upon others for their very basic and on-going daily care needs. As people entrusted with the support of individuals with disabilities, it is critical that we are all aware of and recognize instances of abuse and/or neglect and know how and to whom to report suspected instances of abuse.

There are times, however, as a staff person, you may be wondering if what you just witnessed is abuse and/or neglect. You may also worry that by reporting suspected abuse, you are "ratting" on a friend or co-worker and that your co-worker may try to punish you for reporting something. Below are some important reminders to think about. Remember, as a staff person, you are a mandated reporter and an important advocate for the individuals you support

Is What I Saw Abuse and/or Neglect?

On a daily basis, you will see many interactions between caregivers and individuals with disabilities. It may not always be clear to you whether what you witnessed is abuse and/or neglect. So what constitutes abuse and/or neglect that requires reporting?

Abuse is behavior that is used to control, weaken or harm another person. It can be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or financial.

Neglect occurs when a caregiver withholds or refuses to give a person with a disability the care and support he/she needs.

If you have ANY doubt about whether something appears to be abuse or neglect, report it to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC).

**Personal Story as told by James
Member, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong**

Sometimes your past is held against you. Sometimes all the work that people do to change is not respected. Sometimes information shared in confidence is used against you. Staff used a person's private information that the person had said in a cruel way. Sometimes, when a person reports abuse it is ignored, even when this abuse is about something that you observed that has to do with someone else. Staff need to remember that people can change and that they have helped them change and grow and to believe in people and the work they have done to help them change. People need to remember that when they hear things they need to report them.