

Adults at Risk Fact Sheet

 Right people, right role, right knowledge

STANDARD 7

ONGOING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Criteria 7.3

Personnel are supported to recognise the factors that contribute to adult abuse, with a focus on adults at risk.

Indicators

- 7.3.1 Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse, building knowledge to:
- understand the nature and impact of adult abuse;
 - understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse;
 - identify risk factors, such as abuse of power, and exploitation;
 - recognise how adults and institutions can be groomed, including how power imbalances can be exploited; and
 - understand what could make specific adults at increased risk of abuse.

Everyone has the right to live their life free from abuse and harm and have their human dignity respected. Many of the most vulnerable members of society are adults whose circumstances place them at greater risk of abuse, harm and exploitation.

Who is an adult at risk?

A person who is 18 years of age or over, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.

Adults at risk may include people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people. Their risk factors may be increased with additional factors such as physical frailty, chronic illness, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour, lack of mental capacity, social and emotional problems, poverty, homelessness or substance misuse.

What is adult abuse?

Abuse is the improper treatment of a person that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment,

neglect, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, exploitation, or other types of aggression.

There are several categories of abuse of adults, such as:

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Elder abuse
- Financial abuse
- Exploitation

Abuse can range from treatment that ignores your human rights, causes actual mental or physical suffering, and can significantly affect quality of life.

What should I do if I know or suspect an adult is being abused?

If you the person you are concerned about is in imminent danger you should contact the police immediately.

People working in Government funded aged care providers are legally obligated to report known or suspected abuse through the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS system). More information regarding SIRS can be located [here](#).

In South Australia, known or suspected abuse of an adult can be reported to the Adult Safeguarding Unit on 1800 372 310.

Every organisation or service should have a Complaints Handling Policy and an Incident Management and Reporting system through which you should report your concerns. If you are unsure of how to approach this, then you must talk to someone who can assist you in reporting your concerns so the person at risk can be protected and safe. Reporting suspected or known abuse is an extremely effective tool in the safeguarding of adults at risk.

- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards 6.1 and 6.4 specifically address the requirement to report complaints and concerns of abuse and harm.

Duty of Care vs Dignity of Risk

Adults at risk have the right to live free from abuse and harm and have their dignity, culture and identity valued and respected. Whilst their capacity to make decisions has to be considered, adults at risk have the right to make their own choices and to live their lives as they wish.

Organisations and services have a duty of care to the people they are working with. Duty of care is the responsibility of organisations and their staff, to ensure they do no harm to the people they support. However, this does not mean that the organisation must protect the person from themselves. Dignity of risk refers to the legal right of every person, including those with a disability, to make choices and take risks in order to learn, grow and have better quality of life. Taking risks is an integral part of life

experiences and should be respected and supported. An individual has the right to make choices about their own lives until it is determined that assistance is required.