



10 minutes

## Communication:

Effective communication starts with a basic principal, **respect**. Each person – the sender of the message and the receiver- brings with him/her characteristics that are unique. Physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual aspects make up who we are. Communication need to demonstrate acceptance of a person’s individual worth combined with good listening skills.



### Overcoming Communication Barriers

#### 1. Overcoming Communication Barriers

Below are some suggestions which may help make communication easier:

- A. Use clear and simple language
- B. Ask open-ended, one-part questions
- C. Be an attentive listener and allow for periods of silence
- D. Allow sufficient time so that there is no time pressure
- E. Use explanations that progress from simple to complex
- F. Allow eye contact, but do not force it
- G. Allow plenty of space to move around: medication may induce restlessness
- H. Keep background noise to a minimum
- I. Sit facing older person to help them identify visual cues



### Ways to Ask About Abuse if Approached

#### 2. Ways to Ask About Abuse if Approached

- A. **Be Direct**
  - Ask non-threatening questions
  - Respond empathetically
- B. **Universalize the Question** - Many people are hurt physically or in other ways by someone they know. Is this happening to you?

### C. Gradual / Exploratory

- How are things going for you?
- What kinds of stresses do you have in your everyday life?
- Is there anyone in your life who is pretty strict, hard to please?
- Do you get blamed a lot?
- Can you disagree? What happens when you don't agree?
- Are there situations in which you felt afraid?
- How often are you called names? How often are your feelings hurt?
- Are you ever threatened with forced sex, pushed, shoved, had your hair pulled or been slapped?
- Have you had things thrown at you?
- Had precious possessions intentionally broken?
- Have your pets, children, grandchildren, other persons close to you been intentionally hurt?
- Are you ever prevented from leaving the house, seeing friends or family?
- Do you feel safe in your home?
- Should I be concerned for your safety?



Visuals

### Supportive Ways to Respond to an Abuse Victim

### 3. Supportive Ways to Respond to an Abuse Victim

- Allow time for person to speak
- Listen
- Believe what the person says
- Empathize: validate the person's feelings
- Make it clear the abuse was wrong and it was not the person's fault
- Speak directly about the violence
- Ask in what ways you can be helpful
- Respect the person's right to self-determination
- Assure the person there are resources to help and that he or she is not alone
- Discuss a safety plan and offer follow-up contact



## Don'ts in Communicating with Victims

### 4. Don'ts in Communicating with Victims

- **Talk to the victim while others are present:** Confidentiality and privacy are a must and others presence may hinder the information the victim wants to provide – especially if the perpetrator is present.
- **Blame the victim:** Societal attitudes often blame the victim for the situation. This is extremely harmful to the victim and may result in an inability to trust.
- **Tell the victim it is not that bad / minimize the pain:** The shame and fear that they feel is natural.
- **Check out the story with the abuser:** Talking with the abuser may tip them off to a possible evaluation. This not only hinders the evaluation, but may also endanger the victim.
- **Demand that the victim take a certain course of action:** You may offer suggestions, but it is necessary that (s)he is comfortable with the plan of recourse.
- **Think you have failed if you did not fix the situation:** Many abusive situations are indications of patterns of behaviors that have occurred for years. To assume one can always alleviate the situation by making a report or other intervention is unrealistic.



## Victim Characteristics

### 5. Victim Characteristics

- Victim is competent to make decisions and wants help
- Victim is competent to make decisions and doesn't want help
- Victim is incompetent to make decisions and someone else needs to make decisions for that person
- Victim is competent to make decisions, but there are barriers to that person being able to ask or accept help



## Criminal Background Checks

### What YOU Can Do

#### 1. Criminal Background Checks

Facilities, Agencies and Programs that provide care to dependent adults are

mandated to complete dependent adult abuse and criminal background checks on all prospective employees. They may also check child abuse and the sex offender registry. If the prospective employee has a background but the employer wishes to hire the person anyway because the offense appears to be minor, the employer may request the DHS complete a Record Check Evaluation. DHS determines employability however it is up to the employer whether or not to hire the person. (Iowa Code 235B.6(2)(c); 235B.6(2)(e); 135C.33)

**For Record Check Evaluations call: 515-362-7440 or 515-362-7441**



## **Public Awareness**

### **2. Public Awareness**

Anyone can participate in raising public awareness. Here are a few ways to get started:

**A. Work with your local area agency on aging or the Department on Aging on the public awareness campaign.** Effective methods of campaigning include putting up flyers or notices around your workplace, talking to friends and acquaintances, or encouraging local radio stations to broadcast public service announcements.

**B. Publicize the dependent adult abuse hotline.**

Abuse in the Community - DHS: 800-362-2178

Abuse in Facilities or Programs - DIA: 877-686-0027

Medicaid Fraud – DIA: 515-281-5717 or 515-281-7086

Information on Elder Abuse: LifeLong Links: 866-468-7887

**C. Encourage people to volunteer in health care facilities, at domestic violence shelters, and as respite caretakers.**

**D. Invite a speaker who has professional experience with dependent adults to speak to a group to which you belong.** Invite guests such as law enforcement officers, mental health counselors, ombudsmen, and adult protective services' evaluators to discuss topics including community supports and services for victims, and caretaker trainings to prevent abuse of elder rights.

- E. **Encourage people to identify dependent or older adults in the community who may be at risk.**

### 3. Ten Tips for Preventing Abuse



#### Ten Tips for Preventing Abuse

The following list suggests actions that are designed to prevent abuse and to help the family and caretaker develop effective coping mechanisms and support systems.

- A. **Assess the person for signs of abuse/neglect.** Early identification is essential to break a pattern of abuse or neglect.
- B. **Assess the family at risk for abuse or neglect, and intervene as necessary before abuse occurs.** Prevention through identification of high-risk families can prevent abuse or neglect from happening.
- C. **Develop a trusting relationship with the older adult and their relatives.** This promotes open discussion of difficulties.
- D. **Offer guidance in caregiving.** The caretaker may lack information on how to properly care for the person.
- E. **Provide information about community resources and alternative living arrangements before an older person moves in with an adult child.** Knowledge of options and services can help avoid situations which may lead to abuse.
- F. **Encourage the caretaker to join a self-help group or to utilize respite services.** Discussion groups provide education and support. They also help to relieve frustration.
- G. **Emphasize the importance of social involvement.** Using multiple support sources lessens the caretaker's responsibilities and increases the older adult's sense of independence.
- H. **Report suspected abuse accurately.** Use direct quotes, and give specific descriptions of physical findings. Sketches and photographs of injuries may be extremely helpful. Accurate and comprehensive documentation is essential for diagnosis and intervention by legal or social services.

- I. **Consult a social worker about referring the person to community agencies or providing alternative living arrangements.** This encourages her/him to choose formal support services that maximize their independence and enhance their well-being.
- J. **The dependent or older adult may need to consider relocation in order to prevent abuse or neglect.** If appropriate, suggest alternative living arrangements, such as with relatives, friends, or in a boarding home, retirement community, or health care facility.



**Post Test or  
Evaluation**

- 4. **Administer the post-test OR have participants complete the evaluation in their handbook.**