



### *Individual and Family Fact Sheet – ABUSE AND NEGLECT*

February 2003

## **YOU** have the right to be free from abuse or neglect . . .



Here are important things you should know if you ever think that you are being hurt by someone who provides supports for you. Hopefully, you will never experience this. But if you do, this fact sheet will tell you what you need to know and what to do.

#### **What Is Abuse?**

Abuse means the willful infliction by a caregiver, of physical pain or injury or the willful deprivation of services necessary to the physical and mental health and safety of an individual. The term also includes the use of offensive language or acts, to provoke or upset an individual or subject him or her to humiliation or ridicule. Willful means the intentional acts or omissions or the reckless disregard for the safety and consequences of one's acts or omissions. If you are unsure if something is abuse, report it and let an investigator decide if it is. *If someone is hurting you or making you afraid in any way, you should report it.*

#### **What is Neglect?**

Neglect means the failure by a caregiver through action or inaction to provide an individual with the services necessary to maintain his or her physical and mental health and safety or a situation in which a person with intellectual disability is living alone and unable to provide for him or herself such services. If you are unsure if something is neglect, report it and let an investigator decide if it is. *If you think you are not getting the supports or supervision you need to live safely, you should report it.*



*Don't let anyone discourage you from reporting suspected abuse or neglect. It is your right to make the report yourself.*

#### **What Should I Do If I Think I Am A Victim Of Abuse Or Neglect?**

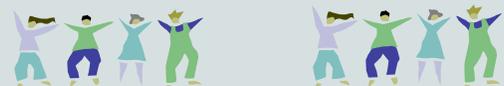
Your first concern is your own personal safety. If you think someone is abusing you, **you need to get away from that person as soon as you can.** Get help from a neighbor, a friend, your case manager or broker, or the police, if necessary. Once you are safe, then you can report the suspected abuse.

#### **How Do I Report Abuse Or Neglect?**

- **If you are a young person aged 17 or younger, CALL:**  
The Department of Children and Families (DCF)  
1-800-842-2288
- **If you are an adult aged 18 to 59, CALL:**  
The Office of Protection and Advocacy (P&A)  
1-800-842-7303 or TDD (860) 566-2102
- **If you are 60 years or older, Call:**  
The Department of Social Services (DSS)  
1-203-597-4145 or Info Line 211

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## Do I Need To Report Suspected Abuse Or Neglect To DDS, Too?

Yes, you also need to report suspected abuse or neglect to your case manager or broker who will help you report it to the appropriate people in the region.

If the suspected abuse involves physical or sexual assault or any other criminal act, the police will be notified by the agency you report it to. If you want to be sure that a report was made to the local police, call them directly. [\*You have the right to press charges\*](#) against the suspected person (also known as the alleged perpetrator) in criminal cases.



### What Happens When I Report Abuse Or Neglect?

When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff person, the employee is placed off duty by the employer and an investigation begins. This means the staff suspected of abuse or neglect cannot work with you until the investigation is completed. As an employer, you must follow the laws that protect the worker. At the same time, you need to be safe and get the supports you need. DDS staff will help you if you are ever faced with this situation. If the person suspected of abuse or



neglect is not a staff person, your case manager or broker will help you plan how to keep safe until the investigation is completed.

### What If I Am Hurt And Need To See A Doctor?

If you want to see a doctor for treatment and follow-up care, do not hesitate to do so. It can be helpful to have someone take photos of any bruises, cuts, or other injuries as evidence that could help with the investigation.

### Who Conducts The Investigation?

Investigations are done by one of the protective service agencies (DCF, P&A, or DSS), DDS or your private provider agency, depending on your age and where you live or receive services. If you have information or evidence that would help in the investigation, it is important for you to share it with the investigator as soon as possible.

### What Happens During The Investigation?

When an investigator is assigned, he or she will conduct a thorough investigation to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident.

Investigators will also interview and take written statements from you, any potential witnesses and the alleged perpetrator (the person suspected of committing the abuse or neglect).

The investigator reviews the evidence gathered, determines whether or not the abuse or neglect happened (also referred to as substantiation of abuse or neglect), and prepares a report of findings.



### What Happens When The Investigation Is Complete?

You should receive information about the findings of the investigation when it is completed, and whether or not abuse or neglect was substantiated.

If the investigation finds there was no abuse or neglect (that is, allegation **is not** substantiated), then the employee can return to work. If there was abuse or neglect (the allegation **is** substantiated), the employee will face disciplinary action. In some cases involving criminal acts, the investigation report may be referred to the police for further investigation, which may result in criminal charges.

**If you have any questions about abuse or neglect, call your case manager or support broker for help.**