

# INCIDENT REPORTING FOR ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



## WHY REPORT CERTAIN INCIDENTS TO DDS?

When an individual receives DDS funded supports in their home, DDS shares responsibility with other members of a individual's team for their safety and well-being. DDS needs to know when serious events happen to an individual so they can help evaluate whether the individual is receiving the supports that he or she needs, and whether appropriate action has been taken to protect the individual and prevent a recurrence.

## WHAT TYPES OF INCIDENTS NEED TO BE REPORTED?

Incidents that affect the health, welfare and safety of an individual must be reported if they occur **while a paid staff person is working with the individual**. Types of incidents to be reported include the following:

**Death** – All deaths should be reported.

**Suicide Attempt** – When there is a serious, intentional, voluntary attempt by the individual to take their own life.

**Near Drowning** – Any water incident that almost results in an individual's drowning and requires emergency response.

**Missing Person** – when an individual is missing and considered to be at risk.

**Physical Assault** – when an individual is the victim of a serious physical attack with such force as to cause or potentially could have caused serious injury.

**Sexual Assault** – when an individual is the alleged victim of any unwanted sexual advance.

**Fire** – a fire in an individual's environment that requires active involvement of fire personnel or equipment.

**Serious behavioral event** – an event where an individual's actions would have led to serious injury or death without intervention.

**Medical Treatment Resulting From Injury** – when an individual needs emergency medical treatment generally beyond first aid; e.g. emergency personnel are called.



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**Unexpected Hospital Visit** – when there is an unplanned emergency visit to an acute care medical or psychiatric hospital for the purpose of evaluation and treatment of an immediate medical or psychiatric concern.

**Suspected Mistreatment** – whenever there is suspicion of abuse or neglect by a caretaker.

**Transportation Accident** – when an individual is involved in a traffic accident where there was a potential for serious harm or that identifies safety needs for the individual.

**Unplanned Transportation Restraint** – the emergency use of physical holding or a mechanical device (not including a regular seatbelt) to keep an individual safe during transport.

## HOW DO YOU REPORT AN INCIDENT?

Incidents can be reported by a family member, provider, support broker or other member of the individual's team. All incidents as defined above, should be immediately reported to the designated contact person at Department of Developmental Services.

## SHOULD A REPORT BE FILED WITH DPPC FOR ABUSE/NEGLECT IF AN INCIDENT REPORT HAS BEEN FILED.

Reporting an incident to the designated contact person DDS, does not relieve you of the responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC). Remember, if you suspect that the incident may also constitute abuse or neglect, report it to DPPC.

INCIDENT REPORTING IS AN IMPORTANT STAFF AND PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITY. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE INFORMATION OR TRAINING, CALL THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES.



DDS  
2/11/11

# REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

## WHAT IS ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

**ABUSE** is the non-accidental act by a caretaker upon an adult with disabilities over the age of 18 that creates an injury or substantial risk of injury. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional.

**NEGLECT** is the failure by a caretaker to provide an adult with disabilities with basic needs, either deliberately or through negligence, such as food, shelter, medical care, supervision or emotional stability.

## WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A CARETAKER?

Any person who is, at the time in question, entrusted with a degree of responsibility for the adult with disabilities. This could include a caretaker who is him/herself under age 18. A caretaker can also include a parent, a direct support professional or a clinician.

## EXAMPLES OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Bruising, welts or burns that cannot be sufficiently explained
- Unusual bruising patterns that reflect the shape of the instrument used to cause injury
- Physical injury such as a fracture of a bone or a nontrivial injury
- Hitting with a hand, fist, foot or object
- Shoving, tripping, pushing, pulling, scratching, pinching, cutting, biting
- Giving medication not prescribed or more than the prescribed dose
- Any sexual contact
- Leaving someone unsupervised who requires supervision

## AM I REQUIRED TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

**A MANDATED REPORTER** includes any person paid to care for or work with an adult with disabilities in any public or private facility or home or program funded by the Commonwealth.

# REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

## WHAT DO I DO IF I SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

First, make sure the individual is safe. If the situation warrants it, **call 911** for police and emergency medical services.

The standard for reporting suspected abuse and neglect is “reasonable cause to believe” which means that mandated reporters need only a "**mere suspicion**" that abuse or neglect was committed against a person with a disability. If abuse or neglect is suspected, trust your feeling and file a report to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission's (DPPC). 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-426-9009. It is better to err on the side of action. If there is suspected abuse or neglect, a report **must** be made to:

*The Disabled Persons Protection Commission  
(DPPC) Hotline: 1-800-426-9009*

## WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE SOMETHING IS ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

**WHEN IN DOUBT, REPORT!**

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER I REPORT A CONCERN?

Reporters will receive a form letter within a few days of filing a report with the DPPC hotline informing them whether the report they filed was within the jurisdiction of DPPC to investigate or referred to another state agency for review and consideration. If the report was assigned for investigation, the letter will indicate which agency has been assigned to investigate; either DPPC, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH) or the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), and the reporter should expect to be contacted by the assigned investigator. If the report was not assigned for investigation, due to lack of jurisdiction, the reason will be indicated on the form letter. Reports that are not investigated by DPPC are still referred to the appropriate state agency for any follow-up deemed necessary.