

# SIGNS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION

The law protects the health and safety of “vulnerable adults” and children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It is important for participants and employees to know signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect and exploitation for health and safety reasons.

A vulnerable adult is someone over the age of 65 with a long-term disability. If you have concerns that a “vulnerable adult” or child is being harmed, please report it right away.



[www.outreachhealthnorthcarolina.com](http://www.outreachhealthnorthcarolina.com)  
[outreach.NC@outreachfiscalagent.com](mailto:outreach.NC@outreachfiscalagent.com)  
1-877-901-5827

## What is Abuse, Neglect, & Exploitation?

**ABUSE** is the willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment which results in physical harm, pain or mental anguish. It also includes the deprivation of food, water, shelter, etc. (Includes emotional, physical and sexual abuse).

**NEGLECT** is the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations to another person, such as the provision of food, clothing, medicine, comfort, or personal safety.

**FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL ABUSE** or exploitation is the illegal or improper use of a person's funds, property, or assets.

**SELF-NEGLECT** is an adult's inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks including providing for one's own food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. Choice of lifestyle or living arrangement is not, in itself, evidence of self-neglect.



## WHAT IS ABANDONMENT?

“Abandonment” is when a person or agency with a duty to care for a vulnerable adult or child acts (or fails to act) in a way that leaves the vulnerable adult unable to get needed food, clothing, shelter, or health care.

## INDICATORS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION

The following descriptions are not necessarily proof of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. But maybe clues that a problem exists, and that a report needs to be made to law enforcement or Adult Protective Services or Child Protective Services.

To report concerns of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, contact the Department of Social Services in the county in which you live. If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, please call 911

## BEHAVIORAL SIGNS

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Acting out
- Anger
- Isolation/withdrawal
- Depression
- Contradictory statements
- Implausible stories
- Hesitation to talk openly
- Confusion or disorientation

## PHYSICAL SIGNS

- Forced isolation
- Skin discoloration
- Sunken eyes or cheeks
- Pain from touching
- Soiled clothing or bed
- Inappropriate administration of medication
- Injury that has not been cared for properly
- Injury that is inconsistent with explanation for its cause
- Cuts, puncture wounds, burns, bruises, welts
- Frequent use of hospital or health care/doctor shopping
- Lack of necessities such as food, water, or utilities
- Dehydration or malnutrition without illness-related cause
- Lack of personal effects, pleasant living environment, personal items

## FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Unexplained sudden transfer of assets,
- Providing unnecessary services,
- A complaint of financial exploitation,
- Unexplained missing funds or valuables
- Providing substandard care
- Unpaid bills despite having enough money
- Sudden changes in bank account or banking practice
- Adding additional names on a bank signature card
- Unapproved withdrawal of funds using an ATM card
- Sudden changes in a will or other financial documents
- Forged signature for financial transactions or for the titles of property
- Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming their rights to a person's affairs and possessions
- Unexplained withdrawal of a lot of money by person accompanying the victim