



### **F31 Abuse and Neglect of Vulnerable Persons: A Community Approach to Recognition & Reporting**

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The goals of this presentation are to present to the forensic community an aid to help health care professionals recognize signs of abuse/neglect on vulnerable persons (children, spouse/partner, and older persons) and on how to report their suspicions to the proper local authorities in their jurisdictions.

This presentation will provide a mechanism whereby a local professional or health care organization can educate health care professionals in their community on how to recognize signs of abuse/neglect and then on how to properly report their suspicions. It can be done on a low budget and cover the entire community, with total cooperation of local law enforcement, professional associations, and prevention organizations. A handout of a flyer used in the City of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada will be available to attendees as a reference for their own community.

In a "K-I-S-S" (Keep It Simple Stupid) format, any health care professional will be able to follow: 1) What to do in their initial consultation with the victim(s) from properly acknowledging the abuse to referring victims for ongoing care; 2) What to check for, as this pertains specifically to: a) physical abuse, b) psychological abuse, c) financial abuse or exploitation, d) neglect (active, passive, and self), e) institutional abuse, f) domestic/family violence, along with indicators of each; 3) Attendees will have a quick reference on how to OR not to interview suspected victims on an ongoing or specific basis with samples of at least eight possible interviewing questions to be used; 4) Possible intervention and considerations of the impact on the person (victim), their wishes, their willingness to change and even their ability to recognize that they are being abused are highlighted, along with having them understand the consequences of their decisions. The health care professional's role as a singular responder, or part of a team of service providers to keep the victim safe and healthy is considered; 5) A main key to this flyer is having health care professionals becoming educated and aware of appropriate resources and services within their communities, and on how to link with them in their broader local community is stressed. The flyer is a mechanism or tool to educate both the health care professional as well as the victim of abuse/neglect by providing information and support groups locally that can respond efficiently and appropriately to the needs of those being victimized or who is at risk of abuse; 6) A Safety Plan is described that recommends considering a change to an element of the victim's environment or their relationship which could result in the elimination of the role of the abuser or context of the abuse, along with specific considerations. In cases of child abuse, the health care professional will of course, still be governed by local state or provincial laws that designate them as 'mandated reporters'. For adult victims, the safety plan goes from the simple home visit by informed friends to considering an escape plan well in advance of the actual incident of abuse; 7) The main and key highlight is how to use the flyer by coordinating and consulting with your own local community's other local service and support groups outside of the health care system and by having their respective names and contact telephone numbers easily available for quick and immediate reference. Most communities have such list available on local city and/or governmental websites. Attendees will be given hints on how to package the flyer in a easily protected and maintained format; how to distribute it to all health care professionals, hospitals, EMS personnel, schools, day care facilities, etc.; how to get appropriate funding for even minimal expenses – all will be covered for those personnel in a position to recognize signs of abuse/neglect on their patients/clients.

#### **Abuse & Neglect, Recognition & Reporting, Community Education**