Assessment of Child and Elder Abuse

Aim:

Although child abuse statistics have declined in recent years, the need to accurately identify abuse and neglect remains important to the safety of our community. In 2009, the number of abused children nationally was 763,000, of which 61,000 were repeat victims. Likewise, the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse estimates that between 1 and 2 million people over 65 have been injured or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depend for care.

Key Points:

Definitions:

Physical abuse is any act which results in a non-accidental physical injury
Emotional abuse includes excessive verbal assaults on a continuous basis. It also includes chronically ignoring and/or rejecting a child.
Sexual abuse is sexual activity between a child and another person and usually includes an element of unequal power or coercion.
Neglect is lack of care or attention to a child by a parent or caregiver that endangers a child's health or welfare

Signs/Symptoms of Child Abuse:

- Physical indicators include, bruises in different stages of healing, lacerations, wounds, swollen areas, human bite marks, cigarette burns, marks on the child's face, head, back, chest, genital area, buttocks or thighs, puncture marks or missing hair
- Withdrawn or aggressive behavioral extremes, complaints of soreness or uncomfortable movement, discomfort with physical contact, clothing inappropriate for the weather

Signs/Symptoms of sexual abuse: (up to age 3)

- Fear or excessive crying, vomiting, feeding problems, bowel problems, sleep disturbances, failure to thrive

Signs/Symptoms of sexual abuse: (ages 2-9)

- Fear of particular people or places, behavioral aggression, victimization of others, nightmares or sleep disturbances

Signs/Symptoms of sexual abuse in older children:

- Depression, suicidal gestures, promiscuity, substance abuse, eating disturbances,
aggression

**Signs/Symptoms of Child Neglect**: Physical neglect generally involves the parent or caregiver not providing the child with basic necessities (e.g., adequate food, clothing and shelter). May encompass physical, educational, emotional or medical neglect.

- Failure to thrive, malnutrition, untreated serious illness
- Chronic truancy unaddressed by parents (**Educational neglect**)
- Ignoring, verbal assault, isolation, corrupting or exploiting (**Emotional/Psychological Neglect**)
- Refusal of medical care for an emergent or chronic illness (**Medical Neglect**)

When reviewing lists of indicators for abuse and neglect, keep in mind that these are indicators. If a child exhibits a behavior or symptom, it does not automatically mean that she has been abused or neglected. The presence of a single indicator does not automatically mean abuse or neglect has occurred. However, a single indicator may warrant your attention, depending on what it is. For example, if the single indicator suggests a serious problem — such as unexplained burn marks — you should report.

**Reporting**: Mandated reporters in NYS include teachers, physicians, nurses, social workers, dentists, Physician Assistants, Child Care Workers, etc

1. All cases of suspected child abuse, neglect or maltreatment must be reported to the "Abuse Hotline" of the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR), 1-800-635-1522. The register is available seven days a week on a 24-hour basis.
2. The DSS 22212 A reporting form must be completed and processed within 48 hours (or 2 Business days) from the time of the oral report.
3. The following information must be obtained and entered on the DSS 2221A reporting form when the call is made: state register number and phone number of local office of ACS/CPS to which the case will be assigned. The Local Register number will be supplied later by the local ACS/CPS case worker.
4. The county ACS/CPS address, State and Local Register numbers and caseworker’s name and phone number where the case is assigned can be obtained by calling the Application Section of ACS/CPS.
5. Copies of this form should also be sent to the Child Protection Designated Coordinator.

**Signs/Symptoms of Elder Physical Abuse**

- Abrasions on the arms, legs, torso or strap marks or “Wrap around injuries”
- Bilateral bruising of the arms or inner thighs, signs of traumatic hair or tooth loss
- Sprains, dislocations, fractures, or broken bones
- Injuries are unexplained or explanations are implausible
- Delay between injury and seeking medical care
Signs/Symptoms of Elder Sexual Abuse

- Genital or anal pain, irritation or bleeding
- Torn, stain or bloody undergarments
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Inappropriate or aggressive sexual behavior

Signs/Symptoms of Elder Financial Abuse

- Implausible explanations given about the elderly person's finances by the elder or the caregiver
- Unpaid bills, eviction notices, or notices to discontinue utilities
- New "best friends"

Signs/Symptoms of Elder Neglect

- Inadequate living environment evidenced by lack of utilities, sufficient space, and ventilation, infestations,
- Poor personal hygiene including soiled clothing, dirty nails and skin, matted or lice infested hair, odors, and the presence of feces or urine
- Unclothed, or improperly clothed for weather
- Untreated medical or mental conditions including infections, soiled bandages, and unattended fractures
- Exhibits emotional distress such as crying, depression, or despair, nightmares, difficulty sleeping
- Exhibits regressive behavior
- Exhibits fear toward the caregiver

Reporting

Referrals can be made Monday through Friday, 9am-4pm, directly to Adult Protective Services at (631) 853-2236. At all other times, cases may be reported by calling (631) 854-9100

Resources:

- Quality Management Department Ext 3003 or 3413
- North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System- Southside Hospital’s Child Abuse and Neglect Policy
- North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System- Southside Hospital’s Adult or Elder Abuse Policy
- NYS Office of Children and Family Services