

Abuse in Our Community: Creating an Environment of Awareness and Action

Regional Center of Orange County
Board Training
February 4, 2021

Objectives

- Understanding abuse
- Addressing abuse at the policy level
- Oversight requirements for regional centers and other community agencies
- RCOC's efforts to address abuse and the impact of abuse
- Challenges we face
- Future and evolving efforts

Abuse Occurrence

Abuse includes:

- ❖ Children, adults, and the elderly population we serve

Abuse can occur:

- ❖ In family homes
- ❖ In residential homes
- ❖ At day programs
- ❖ In the larger community

Types of Abuse

- ❖ Physical abuse (includes sexual abuse)
- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Financial abuse
- ❖ Emotional or psychological abuse
- ❖ Isolation

Signs of Abuse

❖ Physical Signs (overt)

- ❖ Bruises, broken bones, malnourishment, dehydration, bed/urine sores, weight gain or loss, discrepancies between person's standard of living and his/her financial assets

❖ Emotional Signs (subtle)

- ❖ Withdrawal, increase anxiety/upset, regression of skills, avoidance or hesitancy, changes in eating/sleeping, tearfulness, apprehension

Statistics on Abuse

- ❖ People with I/DD are 4-10 times more likely to be abused than their peers without disabilities
 - ❖ Those we serve are at greater risk of abuse and:
 - ❖ Tend to be abused more frequently
 - ❖ Are abused for longer periods of time
 - ❖ Are more likely to be abused by a caregiver or someone they know
 - ❖ Many individuals are abused by the same person
 - ❖ Are more likely to remain in abusive situations

Vulnerability Factors

- People with disabilities are often reliant on caregivers to help them meet their daily needs
- Many individuals have limited verbal ability and/or difficulty communicating, and limited ability to advocate for themselves
- Might not be able to recognize it as abuse
 - Sometimes circumstances of abuse are more subtle (withholding medication, overmedicate, take batteries from a wheelchair or leave the person naked as a form of humiliation)
- People who rely on caregivers for daily needs might also fear retaliation or abandonment

Addressing the Prevalence of Abuse

Intervention & Preparedness

Intervention-responding after abuse occurs

- Ensuring the safety and security of individuals
- Coordinating and/or providing therapeutic supports to person
- Enforcement of policies
- Organization accountability
- Working with police and local officials

Addressing the Prevalence of Abuse

Intervention & Preparedness Continued

Preparedness-taking action before abuse occurs

- Create an atmosphere of abuse awareness and action
 - Making prevention a priority
 - Assume that it can happen, and do not take it for granted that it cannot or will not happen
- Being alert and observant (and encouraging the same of others)
- Increasing the opportunity of more inclusion and integration for individuals we support
- Continuous training (for staff, for the organization)

How do we address abuse at the policy/governance level?

Zero Tolerance Policy Regarding Abuse and Neglect of Those We Serve

- Allegations of abuse will be thoroughly investigated
- Mandated reporters must comply with the law
- Vendors must train employees upon hire and annually

Policy on Notification to Persons Served and Families of Significant Service Deficits

- Persons served and families are promptly notified of a verified immediate danger or substantial inadequacy

Policy on Background Check Requirement for Providers

- Vendors must conduct background checks for all new hires providing direct care to persons served
- Must include a nationwide criminal history search and sex offender registry search

RCOC's Responsibilities

Oversight of Service Providers

- Unannounced visits of licensed group homes (2/year)
- Monitoring by Service Coordinators through IPP process
- Abuse reporting requirements
 - Mandated reporting
 - Special incident reports (SIR)
- SIR Investigation
- Accountability
 - Technical Assistance
 - Corrective Action Plans
 - Sanctions
 - Future Referrals

Oversight Responsibilities of Other Agencies

- Community Care Licensing (Community Care Facilities)
- Department of Public Health (Intermediate Care Facilities)
- Long Term Care Ombudsman
- Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services
- Law Enforcement
- Orange County Superior Court

RCOC's Efforts to Address Abuse

- Person Centered Thinking (PCT) and planning
- Ongoing collaboration and training
 - Persons served
 - Service Coordinators
 - Vendors
- Use of technology
- ***See Something, Say Something*** campaign
- Collaboration with community agencies

Challenges

The Voices and Perspectives of Our Community

- Rick Perez – Day Program Provider
- Rebekah Hayes – Residential Provider
- Bruce Hall – Parent
- Marina Stanic – Community Care Licensing
- Keli Radford – Service Coordination
- Sean Watson – Quality Assurance

Future Efforts

- Risk Management Committee
- Health, Wellness, and Safety Community Advisory Council
- Abuse Awareness Task Force

Thank You
&
Questions