Freedom From Abuse: Addressing Risk and Response in Respite

Presenter:
Leslie Atkinson,
The Respite Learning Portal
Safeguards Training for Children and Adult Services, Canada

The Freedom Trail to Respite
15th National Respite Lifespan Respite Conference
Oct. 15-17, 2013
Better understand why vulnerable population are at increased risk of abuse and the issues pertaining to respite situations.

Learn how to reduce the risk of abuse in respite care by addressing key areas:

- Core Values and the Culture of Care
- Policy and Procedures
- Reducing Risk through Human Resources
- Education and Empowerment
- Critical Community Partnerships
Learning Objectives:

- Learn to recognize and respond to suspicions of abuse and the specific issues related to vulnerable people and people with varying abilities.
When more serious forms of abuse or multiple incidents of abuse are factored in, the risk for persons with disabilities is probably twice and high and may be five or more times higher than that of the general population. (Sobsey 1994)
Why are vulnerable population at increased risk of abuse?

Thoughts?
Contributors to Sustaining Abusive Environments

* Systemic issues of power and control contribute to the risk of abuse
* Personal factors such as financial poverty, physical, and emotional dependence on others increase the risk of abuse
* Persons with disabilities may not be considered reliable witnesses
* Myth of higher incidence of false reporting
* Nature of the persons disability may contribute to their increased risk - i.e., autism, lack of access to augmentative communication
* Lack of privacy
* Poor communication
* Lack of choice regarding where or with whom they can live and work
- Poor self worth
- Negative life experiences
- Segregation, institutionalization, group living all contribute to increased risk

Perceptions that Increase Risk

- Impaired cognitive function
- Hearing – Vision - Mobility Impairments
- Less able to understand dangerous situations
- Communication impairment
- Less able to communicate what happened
- Less credibility as a witness or able to identify perpetrators
Who are the Offenders?
Who Abuses?

Natural family, foster family, step relative, date, acquaintance, neighbour, generic service provider, disability service provider, transportation provider, peer with disability, stranger.

(Sobsey, Violence and Abuse in the Lives of people with Disabilities, 1994)
Respite as abuse prevention

Natural Families as Offenders – 15.6% (Sobsey)

- The role of respite in abuse prevention seldom mentioned in research.
- Seldom mentioned as a reason for provision
- Yet criterion in prioritizing and allocating resources
Potential for Abuse in Respite?

Disability Service Provider

28%

(Sobsey)
Thoughts?
What should we do?
Addressing Abuse

What do self advocates say?

Freedom From Harm Working Committee
A self-advocates group
The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Parties to the convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the **full enjoyment of human rights** by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy **full equality under the law**.

Monitored by the [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/disabilities/rights/).

Google to see if your country signed on and ratified?
To name a few...

* The right be a full member of the community
* The right to make decisions for oneself.
* The right to expect access to all types of services and programs in the community.
* The right to access tools for communication
* The right to say ‘no’
People can be confident that they will be safe from harm when they know that:

* They are part of the community.
* **The community cares** about their well being.
* There are **laws that protect** them from abuse and harm.
* They **know about laws** that protect them.
* That the laws are **enforced in the same way as they would for other citizens**
* That they know that if they suffer harm or abuse, that they can **tell someone** about it and **significant action will be taken**.
The Role of Respite

How can respite help reduce the risk?

How can respite help create an effective system to respond when abuse occurs?

How can respite impact the broader community.
How can Respite Address the Risk?

- Address Vulnerability -

Vision & Culture

Education

Policy & Procedures

Human Resources
Vision and Culture

✓ Create a Vision based on values that support equal rights

✓ Develop the culture in your workplace and community that embodies the Vision and Values.
How can Respite Address the Risk?
- Address Vulnerability -

- Vision & Culture
- Policy & Procedures
- Human Resources
- Education
Policy and Procedures

Develop policy and procedures based on core values

* Clear language. Understood by all.
* Does this increase/reduce a person's vulnerability?
* How do the policies fit with laws/law enforcement?
* Does this give service providers the tools to act if abuse is suspected?
* Does it balance safety and self-determination?
How can Respite Address the Risk?

- Address Vulnerability -

Vision & Culture

Education

Policy & Procedures

Human Resources
Human Resources
Shaping the Culture

People are Key

* Create the culture though hiring practices.
* Create common understanding through training.
* Proper Supervision
* Whistle blower protection
* Disciplinary action/Dismissal
* Clear policy on reporting suspected abuse to police
* Support community involvement to reduce isolation of individuals and service providers
How can Respite Address the Risk?
- Address Vulnerability -

- Vision & Culture
- Policy & Procedures
- Human Resources
- Education
Educate and Empower Everyone

✔ Individual
✔ Family
✔ Respite provider
✔ Agency
✔ Integrated services
✔ Broader Community

Create a common language and understanding.
Education and Training

- **Abuse: Recognition, Response, Reporting**
- **Develop training for all to help reduce vulnerability.**
Safeguards has developed a bilingual Respite Learning Portal used by many agencies as a pre-screening and orientation tool as well as training.

There are 2 online courses, webinars resources and Parent Guide.

Next Online Course:

Abuse: Recognition, Response, Reporting
Training to Address Vulnerabilities

- Understanding rights
- Decision-making
- Social skills
- Developing friendships
- Assessing risky situations
- Boundaries
- Communication
- Sex and relationships
- Understanding and reporting abuse
Addressing Vulnerabilities
The Culture and Training

V: Limited opportunities for social engagement
   Action -> Create real social opportunities in the community

V: Socialization that promotes and rewards compliance
   Action -> Encourage, teach independent decision-making

V: Limited social skills
   Action -> Teach, practice social skills in the community.
V: Limited access to relationships
Action -> Provide opportunities to build relationships with others in the community. Allow the time and space for friendships to develop.

V: Poor social discrimination, limited understanding of dangerous and/or risky situations
Action -> Respite provides teachable moments.
  -> Respite providers can point out possible risky situations and model behaviour.
V: Limited knowledge of body and sexuality
Action: Teach about the body and what is private. The right to say no. Provide sex and relationship education.

V: Accustomed to intimate care in isolated settings
Action: Teach staff proper care approaches. Ensure staff ask for consent with intimate care each time.
V: Limited affective and sexual vocabulary
Action -> Provide language and communication tools.

V: Limited experience using assertiveness/boundaries
Action -> Teach and support decision-making.
How can respite help create an effective system to respond when abuse occurs?

* Expect and demand equal access to services
* Educate everyone
* Create partnerships in the broader community
* Educate partners
* Educate the public
The Broader Community

* Laws and Policy-makers
* Law Enforcement/Criminal System
  - police, court, support services
* Health, Mental Health, Trauma
* Community Support Services
* Other community businesses and organizations
Laws and Policy -Makers
Better understand their issues
Clarify expectations of equal access to services
Share advice and educate each other
Create protocols together
Educate regarding communication and assistive communication devices.
Provide referrals to related services
Consider The Wellness Check Concept
Health, Mental Health, Trauma

- Demand equal access to services
- Grow the services and expertise
- De-stigmatize the profession of mental health services for disability sector.
- Attract students to the field of study
- Train and cross-train and train again
Community Support Services

Working Together to Address Isolation

- Develop partnerships within related services
- Integrate Services
- Create a Communication Plan
- Develop Protocols for multiple support services and withdrawal from services
What is Abuse?
Physical Abuse

* Defined by the Criminal Code of Canada and is a form of common assault.
* an act of assault, or threat of an assault that could cause physical injury or fear of physical injury

Physical abuse hurts or injures a person’s body.
* Examples- Hitting, slapping, punching, burning, kicking, shaking, beating, etc
Physical

Any physical restraint where it is misused.

* All agencies and their staff should have clear policy and procedure with regard to the use of physical or mechanical restraints, this includes regular review.

* Consent and who has legal authority to consent for the person in care should be included.
Verbal

* The use of demeaning language and name calling. Negative verbal depictions of disability or attractiveness are also forms of verbal abuse.
Verbal

* Examples - Yelling at, shouting at, making fun of, calling names, insulting or sarcastic remarks.
* Threats to withhold help or care.
Unwanted touching of a person’s sexual body parts. The lack of consent is the defining feature. Here it is important to note that the hierarchy makes it impossible for there to be consent between a person with a disability and their care provider. Sexual Abuse is also about the denial of a person’s right to engage in consenting sexual behaviour.  QAMT
Sexual abuse is any forced or unwanted sexual contact or activity without consent.

Sexual Assault is the legal term.

Other terms include:
- Rape, date rape, sexual harassment, childhood sexual abuse
- Sexually assaulting or abusing another person is against the law
Examples

- Forced kissing or touching of another, without consent
- Forcing someone to have sex or sexual contact
- Threatening or coercion as a means of obtaining consent
- Forcing another person to look at sexual conduct, pictures, movies of sexual activity or nudity
- Forcing/Coercing another person to end a pregnancy, take birth control, or forced sterilization
Psychological

* Whenever constant criticism insulting threatening degrading humiliating intimidating or terrorizing of a person occurs, this is deemed psychological abuse.

* Denying choices, ordering a person to do things that he/she does not consent to, that are dangerous or harmful to the individual.
Entering an individual’s room without permission, taking or removing/withholding possessions without consent. (if for safety or other reasons a person’s belongings are removed this should be done only under supervision of a qualified registered practitioner).
Emotional Abuse

* The misuse of power in any way to cause a person to lose respect for themselves.
* Can also include the deameaning of ones faith or beliefs or the imposition of another ‘s faith onto the person
Financial Abuse

* Constitutes the misuse, misappropriation or restriction of someone’s financial assets for personal gain.
* Theft or misuse of an individual's money or property.
* Spending or stealing someone else’s money is against the law.
Examples

* Taking control of someone’s money without their permission
* Misuse of their funds for personal gain.
* Refusing to let an individual direct or help decide how to spend their own money where they have competence to do so.
* Using or borrowing an individuals money even temporarily, for personal use (this should not be done even with consent due to the power imbalance).
Failure to provide the necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter care or supervision. People with disabilities have a right to expect that their basic care needs will be provided and that they will be provided with appropriate supervision for their age and developmental needs.

Neglect is against the law.
Neglect

Examples

* Refusing any or all assistance or help that is needed.
  eg. Personal care, feeding, bathing, assistance with mobility, provision of basic necessities
* Isolation being left alone or ignored for prolonged periods of time.
Exploitation:

* Taking advantage of a person’s disability to trick or manipulate for personal benefit. This includes persuasion to do things that are illegal or not in the person’s best interest.
Harrassment

* The use of any comments, conduct that are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading, offensive or discriminatory, directed toward an individual or group of individuals.
The use of comments or conduct of a sexual nature undertaken with the intent of causing offence or humiliation.

- Unwanted or unwelcome Sexual or gender related gestures or comments that are offensive. (Ontario Human Rights Commission)
People who have a history of abuse may wish to talk about historic abuse, this is important and should be dealt with sensitively.
# Common Signs of Abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Behavioural</th>
<th>Circumstantial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrasions</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Aggression in caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bites</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Alcohol or drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruises</td>
<td>Atypical attachment</td>
<td>Devaluing attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns or Scalds</td>
<td>Disclosure</td>
<td>Isolation of social unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coma</td>
<td>Fearfulness</td>
<td>Other forms of abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental injuries</td>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td>Other violence in setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocations</td>
<td>Noncompliance</td>
<td>Previous history of abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear &amp; eye injuries</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>Sobsey 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fractures</td>
<td>Sleep disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacerations</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ligature marks</td>
<td>(PSTD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Start Planning Today

What stage is your county at?

Where do you want to be?

What actions do you need to put into place?

What resources do you need to fulfill your goals?
Thanks

Leslie Atkinson
The Respite Learning Portal
Safeguards Training for Children and Adult Services

leslie@safeguards-training.net

www.safeguards-training.net