

Diocese of Rapid City

Keeping God's Children Safe

A Safe Environment Newsletter

Summer
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Issue 4

Vulnerable Adults is the focus of this issue. As noted in our diocese's policies, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* broadly defines vulnerable adults as *dependent adults, those who are institutionalized and those who are developmentally disabled or habitually lack the use of reason*. The Diocese of Rapid City expanded that definition to include the following groups of individuals: 1. Those in hospitals, nursing homes or the homebound; 2. Those in programs for the bereaved, separated and divorced; 3. Those in Rachel's Vineyard; 4. Those in Returning Catholics programs; and 5. Those in the annulment process.

ADVOCACY

In the Diocesan Initial Safe Environment Training, the seven main themes of Catholic Social Teaching are presented as necessary components of our faith environment. Several relate to all interactions one has with others, including vulnerable adults. Those who come in contact with our vulnerable adults are asked to be an advocate for the people you visit! Use your senses to be aware of the person you are encountering, as well as their surroundings and environment. Many goals presented in the Adult Safe Environment Training apply to keeping minors safe, as well as vulnerable adults. Signs of distress learned at training may help to notice: fears and anxieties expressed, sleep related difficulties, personality/behavior changes, behavioral regression, loss of pleasure in enjoyable activities, bodily aches and pains, withdrawn, and difficulty concentrating.

Most often, one will find things are fine. If a time comes; if they tell us, or through our visit, we believe they have needs for assistance, what can we do? To help answer this question, information from the SD Department of Human Services is given. Let us learn more so we can share the information with others, and better yet, to take action if/when it is needed to help another person. Be a good Samaritan!

South Dakota law requires individuals in the medical and mental health professions and employees or entities with ongoing contact with and exposure to elders and adults with disabilities, to report knowledge or reasonable suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation of elders and adults with disabilities.

Mandatory Reporters

There are two groups of mandatory reporters and the process for reporting is different for each group. These individuals must make an oral or written report within 24 hours to local law enforcement, local state's attorney or the Division of Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS). A mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to make the required report is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. *Look at the resources at the end of this newsletter for more information.*

Physical and Emotional Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as physical harm, bodily injury or attempt to cause physical harm or injury, or the fear of imminent physical harm or bodily injury on an elder or a disabled adult. Emotional Abuse is defined as a caretaker's willful, malicious and repeated infliction of sexually obscene acts (nudity or simulations) without consent; unreasonable confinement; harm, damage or destruction of property; or verbal harassment or threats to inflict physical, emotional and psychological abuse. For a full definition of physical and emotional abuse please see SDCL 22-46-1.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment
www.rapidcitydiocese.org/safe-environment/

USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/index.cfm>

***"Rescue me,
Lord, from
my foes,
for I seek
refuge in
you."***

- Psalm 143:9

Neglect

Neglect is defined as harm to the health or welfare of an elder or an adult with a disability, without reasonable medical justification, caused by a caretaker, within the means available for the elder or adult with a disability, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

Exploitation

Exploitation is defined as the wrongful taking or exercising of control over property of an elder or adult with a disability with intent to defraud the elder or adult with a disability.

When to Report

Below are signs of possible abuse, neglect or exploitation. For a full list visit: <https://dhs.sd.gov/ltss/adultprotective.aspx>

- ◆ Signs of physical injury such as bruises, welts, burns, lacerations, scars, broken bones or serious internal injuries.
- ◆ Lack of necessities such as heat, food, water, medical care and/or unsafe conditions in the home.
- ◆ Multiple injuries, repeated or untreated injuries, or injuries not compatible with history.
- ◆ Behavioral signs such as agitation, anxiety, resignation, hesitation to reply, anger, depression or fear.
- ◆ Social isolation or inappropriately leaving an older person alone for long periods of time.
- ◆ Caregiver shows aggressive behavior such as threats, insults or other verbal harassment towards the care receiver.
- ◆ Misuse of money or property for another person's monetary or personal gain.
- ◆ Unauthorized sale of real or personal property.

What to Report

In addition to mandatory reporting, people can make reports on a voluntary basis. Persons who in good faith make a report of abuse, neglect or exploitation of an elder or adult with a disability are immune from liability.

Facilities or programs that are licensed or regulated by the Department of Health or Department of Human Services will follow department procedures in place for reporting.

Include the following if you know or have reason to believe someone needs protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation:

- ◆ Victim information
- ◆ Reporter information
- ◆ Caretaker information
- ◆ Perpetrator information
- ◆ The nature and extent of the elder or adult with a disability's injury, whether physical, emotional or financial, if any;
- ◆ The nature and extent of the condition that required the report to be made; and
- ◆ Any other pertinent information

Contact Information

To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elder or an adult with disabilities, please contact your local law enforcement agency, local state's attorney's office or the nearest Department of Human Services' office or email the Division of Long Term Services and Supports.

Reporting in Tribal Communities

Tribal communities may have different definitions of abuse, neglect, exploitation and different reporting requirements. Please check with the appropriate authority in your area.

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- SD Department of Human Services, Division of Long Term Services and Supports. Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Elders or Adults with Disabilities (flyer). 2017. <https://dhs.sd.gov/LTSS/docs/Abuse%20Neglect%20Exploitation.pdf>
 - South Dakota Elder Abuse Task Force, Final Report and Recommendations. December 2015. [https://dhs.sd.gov/LTSS/docs/Attachment%20J%20South%20Dakota%20Elder%20Abuse%20Task%20Force%20Report\(Final\).pdf](https://dhs.sd.gov/LTSS/docs/Attachment%20J%20South%20Dakota%20Elder%20Abuse%20Task%20Force%20Report(Final).pdf)
 - Diocese of Rapid City *Keeping God's Children Safe*, A Safe Faith Environment Newsletter. April 2014. Vol 1, Issue 4. Topic: Vulnerable Adults. <https://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/April2014-Newsletter-Vol-1-Issue-4.pdf>