

Abuse of Older People How Service Providers Can Assist Older People

The Aged Rights Advocacy Service Inc. (ARAS) works to uphold the rights and entitlements of older people through an advocacy process. This involves supporting the older person to speak for themselves or representing them with their permission. We can also liaise with and support service providers who are working with older people.

In situations where older people's rights are at risk of abuse by someone they trust (including family or friends), it may be useful to confide in a service provider. The following 'Principles for Assistance' can act as a guide for the type of assistance the service provider can give.

Principles for Assistance

- Uphold the rights of the older person
- Do not escalate the situation
- Do no harm - the course of action is legal, moral, what the older person wants
- Respectfully listen to and accept what the older person says
- Identify significant others in the older person's formal/informal relationships
- Maintain relationships important to the older person, wherever possible
- Increase the control the older person has over the abuse e.g. strategies and options for action
- Be aware of possible conflicts of interest
- Do not be co-opted into other's agendas.

What is the Priority?

The safety and well being of the older person is always the initial concern.

- If there is danger, the older person should be encouraged to talk to the police.
- Any intervention must be at the older person's direction and at their pace. This may involve working with someone the older person trusts.
- If the older person is unable to give direction due to mental incapacity, it may be necessary to consider an application to the Guardianship Board.

Service Providers must know their 'Duty of Care' for their Organisation

- Duty of care issues can include the obligation to ensure the rights of an older person are safeguarded, upheld and considered alongside physical safety, the right to take risks and confidentiality.
- Service providers should follow their organisation's policy and seek advice from a supervisor, or refer the matter to someone able to deal with the situation. Not taking action, may amount to a failure to meet service provider obligations or duty of care.

Contact an Advocate in the Abuse Prevention Program (APP)

Older people or service providers can contact an APP advocate for information about options and safeguards. This may include information about other available support services.

If Abuse is Suspected, Service Providers should:

- Be cautious about making judgements too early
- Consider whether the person has the capacity to make their own decisions
- Try to find out whether the person wants things to change
- If there is a risk to the person's physical safety or there is an emergency, contact the police (ideally with permission)
- Be careful not to make the person's situation more difficult
- Encourage the person to seek support from appropriate service providers or to contact ARAS
- Consider the 'Principles for Assistance' overleaf
- Be aware that each instance of abuse is unique
- Provide continuing support as needed.

Further Information

ARAS is a free, statewide, confidential, independent service.

For more information or support to protect and uphold your rights please contact ARAS:

16 Hutt Street, Adelaide SA 5000

PO Box 7234, Hutt Street SA 5000

Telephone **8232 5377** or **1800 700 600** freecall for country callers

Facsimile **(08) 8232 1794**

Email **aras@agedrights.asn.au**

Website **www.sa.agedrights.asn.au** or **www.elderabuse.org.au**



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