



Abuse Awareness and **PREVENTION** **GUIDE**

Part of the CtLC *Life Domain Series*

Developed by the Charting the LifeCourse Nexus in partnership
with UMKC-IHD UCEDD, MODDC and MODDD



Additional Tools and Resources Available at LifeCourseTools.com



WHAT IS IT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

The Charting the LifeCourse: Abuse Awareness and Prevention Guide is intended for self-advocates and families, and professionals who might interact with or provide support to a self-advocate. It is focused on the topic of abuse to people with disabilities. The purpose of this guide is to provide:

- ↻ Information on what abuse is, what are the types and signs of abuse, and what to do if abuse happens;
- ↻ Tools for thinking and planning about how to stay safe prior to or after an abuse; and
- ↻ Additional resources for seeking help and support after an abuse has occurred.

In this document, self-advocate refers to individuals with disabilities. This guide interchangeably uses the terms “self-advocate” and “person with a disability.” The term “survivor” is sometimes used to refer to a person who has been abused. “Supporter” refers to any person working through the guide with a self-advocate including a family member, a friend, paid support staff, support coordinator or a survivor advocate.

This guide is designed to be used by a self-advocate “side-by-side” with a supporter. There are sections titled “supporter” throughout the guide that provide additional ideas for discussion and considerations for how the support person can best facilitate and reinforce the information learned.

LEARN. TALK. DO.

As you work through the guide you will learn about abuse, have opportunities to talk about what you learned with your supporter, and have opportunities to take action on what you learned.



LEARN.

The self-advocate and supporter will learn about the types of abuse, healthy and unhealthy situations, and resources for additional information and help.



TALK.

Stopping points will be provided for the self-advocate and supporter to talk about what they just learned. Supporters will be given additional instructions and discussion ideas in the “supporter” box at these stopping points.



DO.

Tools will be provided that can help the self-advocate apply what they learned. Instructions and examples of how to use the tools can be seen in the guide. The self-advocate can print and complete their own tools at lifecoursetools.com/abuse.





FOR SUPPORTERS



STOP! The purpose of this guide is **not** to prompt a disclosure of abuse but to help self-advocates learn the signs of abuse, what resources might help them stay safe from abuse, or who they can go to for help if an abuse occurs. The discussion prompts throughout the guide should focus on reinforcing what was learned. Avoid asking direct questions like “have you ever experienced this type of abuse” or “can you tell me a time this happened to you?”

If an abuse is disclosed, the most important thing you can do for a survivor is start by believing them. Say things like “I believe you.” “That shouldn’t have happened to you.” “It’s not your fault.”

A NOTE ABOUT REPORTING:

Reporting abuse should be the choice of the survivor whenever possible. Not all abuse needs to or should be reported and people’s right to self-determination should be respected. However, every state has laws about mandated reporting that requires certain professionals such as case managers, direct care workers, teachers, and social workers to report abuse. You do not need proof of the abuse to file a report. After a report is made, the incident is referred for investigation to the state agency sanctioned to respond to that type of abuse or to local law enforcement. If you believe the person is in immediate danger, call the police.

1

If abuse is disclosed while working through this guide, follow the steps below:

Be supportive and listen. Assure them that the abuse is not their fault. Think about creating safety for them in that moment (i.e. if you are in a public place, perhaps move somewhere private).

2

Are you a mandated reporter? If so, contact your local child protective agency for individuals under 18 years of age and adult protective services for adults. These contact numbers are provided on the resource page at the back of this guide. To honor self-determination even when making a mandated report, we recommend explaining to the self-advocate why you are making the report and ask them to make the report with you if they feel comfortable.

3

If you are not a mandated reporter, ask the self-advocate if they would like to report the abuse. If so, explain what might happen after the report is made. Also, explain that just because abuse is reported it does not always mean the abuser will be caught or punished for what they did. Whenever possible, make the report together.

4

Explain to them there are resources that can help after an abuse such as counseling services or victim’s compensation services. These resources can be found at the back of the guide.

5

Use the safety planning tool within this guide to help the survivor think through what might help keep them safe in the future. For example, having a “life alert” device with them to alert authorities they are in danger. Even when talking about future safety, it is important to reinforce that their previous abuse is not their fault but the fault of the abuser alone.





DEFINING ABUSE

What is abuse?

Abuse happens when a person mistreats or hurts you or misuses your things on purpose. Abuse can happen one time or it can happen many times. Abuse can take many forms. In this booklet, we describe four types of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, and Financial. These types of abuse are described in the circle on page 5.

Who abuses?

A person who abuses someone else is called an abuser. Anyone can be an abuser: caregivers, residential care staff, transportation providers, personal care attendants, acquaintances, co-workers, friends, family members, religious leaders, or strangers.

Many people believe that they need to be cautious around strangers who might abuse them. While it's true that abuse can happen from a stranger, abuse is more likely to happen from someone you know like a family member or a care provider.

WHY IS LEARNING ABOUT ABUSE IMPORTANT?

Learning about abuse can help a person identify abuse if happens to them.

Abuse can happen to anyone, however, people with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse. People with disabilities are often not given information or education about what abuse is which makes it hard to know when abuse happens to them.

It can also help a person think through steps they can take that might help them stay safe from abuse.

Because there is lack of information and education about abuse, people with disabilities do not have the opportunity to think through steps they can take to be safe or to seek help after an abuse has occurred.

What do I do if it happens to me?

When someone experiences abuse, they may seek help and safety in a variety of ways. They may want to report the abuse to the police or to a state agency that investigates abuse of people with disabilities. They may want to tell someone they trust like a friend or family member. They may want to talk to a counselor who can help them work out their thoughts and feelings about what happened. They may want to make a change to keep themselves safe in the future like moving to a new location or getting an alarm system. This guide will help you think through some of the steps you can take if you have experienced abuse and link you to resources for more help and information.





ABUSE AWARENESS CIRCLE



FOR SUPPORTERS



The above visual is to begin to introduce the different kinds of abuse and start to recognize the icons for the types of abuse. The sections that follow will go into more detail about what each type of abuse looks like as well as what typical, healthy interactions look like. This will help the self-advocate begin to recognize what is okay and what is, or might be, abuse.





VERBAL ABUSE

This chart will help you know when you are being treated respectfully and positively, as well as recognize the signs that you might be being emotionally or verbally abused. The green column on the left lists some signs of a healthy verbal relationship. The red column on the right includes some signs of a possible unhealthy relationship or verbal abuse.

YOU/YOUR:

- ✔ are talked to and treated in a nice way
- ✔ feel open to talk
- ✔ feel confident and comfortable
- ✔ feel your culture, traditions, religion, and personal tastes are taken into account and honored
- ✔ are listened to without feeling judged
- ✔ opinions are valued
- ✔ goals are supported by others in your life
- ✔ have the right to your own feelings, friends, and activities
- ✔ requests are addressed in a timely way

SOMEONE IS:

- ✘ talking to you in a mean way
 - ▶ Yelling at you
 - ▶ Cursing at you
 - ▶ Saying shut up loudly
- ✘ putting you down (for example, calling you stupid)
- ✘ not listening or answering you, embarrassing you in front of other people, saying bad things about you
- ✘ using threats or mean looks or gestures as a form of intimidation
- ✘ refusing to speak to you and ignoring requests
- ✘ keeping you from family, friends, or activities you want to do

FOR SUPPORTERS



Verbal abuse is when someone talks to you in a mean way. They may use name-calling, put-downs, or make fun of you. Verbal abuse hurts your feelings.



Discuss the kinds of things people might say that would be considered abuse. It can be ways of making fun of them or making them feel bad about themselves. Encourage them to talk about how that would make them feel. Explain that sometimes it is also called emotional abuse, and that can also be things like keeping them away from their family, friends or things they like to do. Talk about what threats and intimidation mean.



Ask the person you are supporting to “teach back” to you in their own words what verbal abuse is and how to recognize when it’s happening. Ask them if they can think of examples of verbal abuse. Talk about what steps someone could take if verbal abuse is happening to them or if they are in danger of it happening to them.





PHYSICAL ABUSE

The chart below will help you to know the signs of healthy physical contact and unhealthy or physically abusive situations. The green column on the left lists signs that you are physically healthy and safe from abuse, and the red column on the right includes signs that you might be physically abused or in danger of being harmed.

YOU/YOUR:

- ✔ are able to have space or privacy in your home
- ✔ have access to basic needs like food, clothing, or medicine
- ✔ feel safe and secure in your home, at your job, and in other places
- ✔ home or personal space is free from fleas, lice, roaches or rodents
- ✔ physical health doesn't keep you from doing things you want to do
- ✔ are free from broken bones or bruises
- ✔ have access to adaptive aids you need – such as walkers, braces, crutches, glasses, hearing aids

SOMEONE IS:

- ✘ hurting or trying to hurt your body
- ✘ telling you they will hurt or kill you
- ✘ making you live with fleas, lice, roaches, or rodents
- ✘ using medication to keep you from bothering them; or not giving you medication you should have
- ✘ not helping you care for or keep from getting poor skin conditions or skin breakdown (such as rashes, bedsores, or open wounds)
- ✘ keeping you from getting or using your adaptive aids such as glasses, hearing aids, leg braces, walkers

FOR SUPPORTERS



Physical Abuse is when someone hurts your body on purpose or threatens to hurt your body. It can also be when your physical needs are being neglected or not looked after.



Discuss that physical abuse can be things like pushing, choking, pulling hair, throwing things at you to hurt you, beating you, hitting you, kicking you, grabbing you, twisting your arm, or pinching you. It can also be neglectful things like not providing proper sleeping, cooking, or bathing arrangements, or making you live in filth or with infestations of bugs or other vermin, or eat unsafe or expired food.



Ask the person you are supporting to “teach back” to you in their own words what physical abuse is and how to recognize when it's happening. Ask them if they can think of examples of physical abuse. Talk about what steps someone could take if physical abuse is happening to them or if they are in danger of it happening to them.





SEXUAL ABUSE

The chart below will help you to know the signs of healthy sexual contact and unhealthy or abusive sexual contact. The green column on the left lists signs of healthy sexual contact, and the red column on the right includes signs that you might be in an unhealthy or abusive sexual situation.

YOU/YOUR:

- ✔ are asked if it is okay to touch your body before intimate contact or medical exams/treatments
- ✔ are asked if it is okay to kiss you or hug you before doing so
- ✔ say NO or STOP, and the sexual activity or contact is stopped right away.
- ✔ (and your partner) both welcome and enjoy touching, kissing, and other sexual activity
- ✔ are understood and your wishes are honored when you do not want to be touched or kissed
- ✔ can change your mind at any time about sexual contact or activity even if you already said yes

SOMEONE IS:

- ✘ forcing you to have sex
- ✘ kissing or touching your body when you have said NO, or without you saying yes
- ✘ talking about your body in a sexual way, or talking about or telling a joke about sex that makes you feel uncomfortable
- ✘ showing you their private parts when you don't want them to or without asking you
- ✘ asking or forcing you to touch their private parts
- ✘ forcing you to look at things like pictures or videos of naked people
- ✘ forcing you to kiss, touch, or engage in sex with someone else
- ✘ taking intimate video/pictures of you without your permission

FOR SUPPORTERS



Sexual abuse is when someone touches your body without your permission or consent. It is when someone forces you to have sex when you don't want to. It is also when someone does something sexual to your body that is harmful to you.



Talk about consent, assent, and permission, and that no one should be touching them in a sexual way or having sex with them without it. You may need to help them understand what sex or sexual contact is so they know when it's happening. Talk about that it's not okay for a boss, caregiver, teacher or someone who has power over you to ask you to or force you to do something intimate or sexual. Discuss what it means to have privacy and consent respected (for example, when you do not want to be touched or kissed).



Ask the person you are supporting to "teach back" to you in their own words what sexual abuse is and how to know when it's happening. Ask them if they can think of examples of sexual abuse. Talk about what steps someone could take if sexual abuse is happening to them or if they are in danger of it happening to them.





FINANCIAL ABUSE

This chart will help you know when you are in a healthy financial relationship, and also know the signs of financial abuse. The green column on the left lists signs of healthy financial situations. The red column on the right includes some signs of possible unhealthy financial situations or abuse.

YOU/YOUR:

- ✔ can buy things you want and need
- ✔ are able to get to your money and things that belong to you
- ✔ have a say-so in how your money is spent
- ✔ have access to your money to buy food and other basic needs
- ✔ help decide about money and financial things
- ✔ understand your budget (how much money you have and how much you can afford to spend)
- ✔ know your income and expenses

SOMEONE IS:

- ✘ stealing your money or things, or using without your consent
- ✘ keeping you from having your money to buy things you need or want, such as food, hygiene items, or other necessities
- ✘ keeping you from working or earning money
- ✘ asking you to buy things for them that they should be buying for themselves
- ✘ using things that belong to you or your money to have control and power over you, reward you, or punish you
- ✘ deciding things about your money without asking for your input

FOR SUPPORTERS



Financial abuse is when someone misuses or takes your money, things, or property to use for their own benefit.



Discuss how financial abuse can be when someone asks you to buy them expensive things or give them your money or valuables. It can also be when someone else is controlling your money and making bad financial decisions on your behalf. It might be when someone is not letting you have access to your money to buy the things you need to be healthy, clean, safe, or comfortable. Talk about why using your own property or money as a reward/punishment for good/bad behavior is not okay.



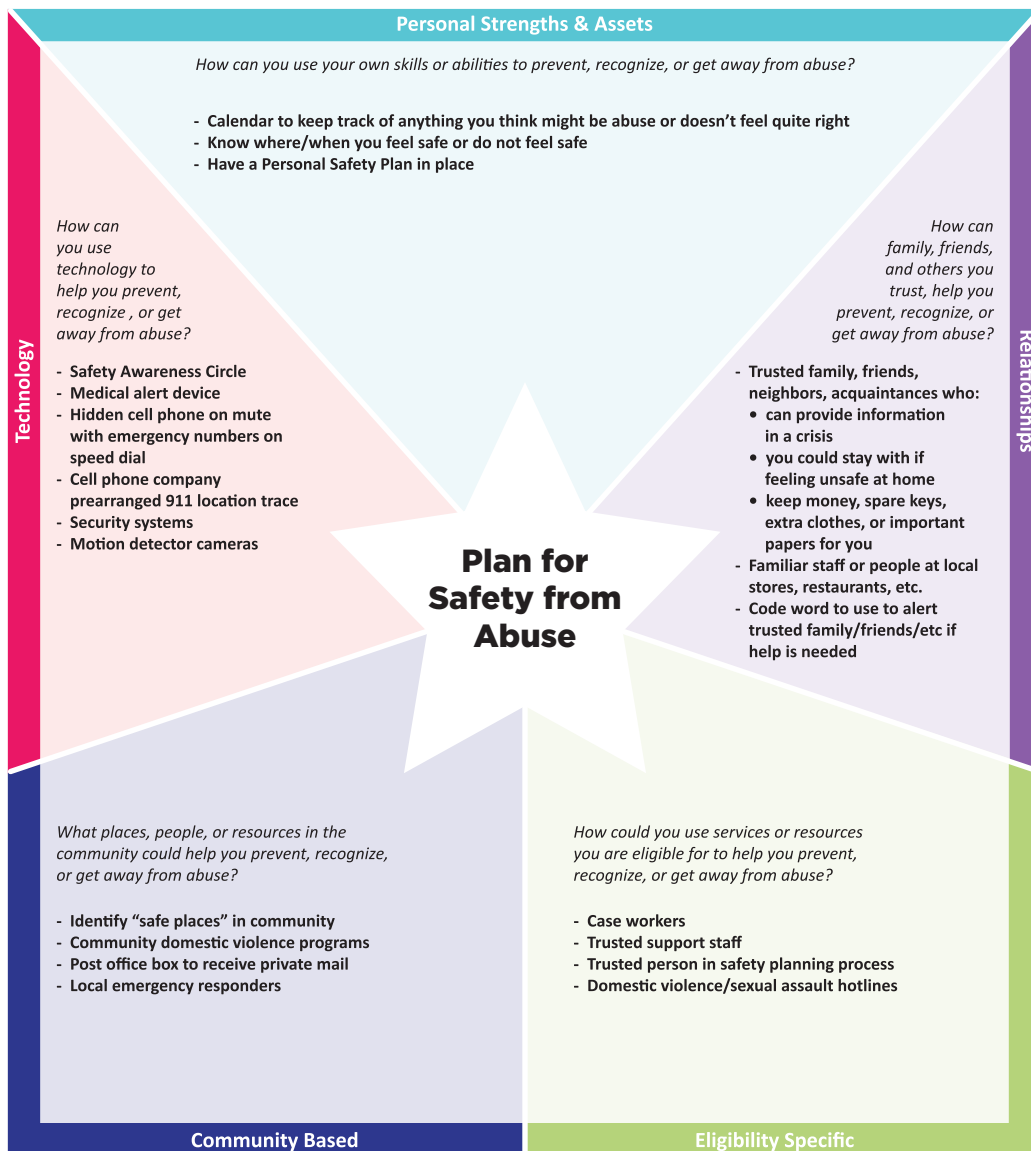
Ask the person you are supporting to “teach back” to you in their own words what financial abuse is and how to know when it’s happening. Ask them if they can think of examples of financial abuse. Talk about what steps someone could take if financial abuse is happening to them or if they are in danger of it happening to them.





INTEGRATED SUPPORTS FOR SAFETY FROM ABUSE

Everyone uses a lot of different kinds of resources and supports to help get through their day-to-day lives and routines. People build on their own strengths, things they own or have, skills, and things they do well. Some people have family and friends in their lives that do things for them (and vice versa). Community groups, clubs, organizations or local resources can also be a source of support, and these days, most people use technology in their lives in many different ways. The Integrated Supports Star for Safety from Abuse will help people who are being abused, or think they might be in danger of being abused, and their trusted supporters, think about resources and supports available in each of the star categories that could help them develop a safety plan. The Star pictured below shows examples of the kinds of supports you might identify, but there are lots of other possibilities to think about as well.





INTEGRATED SUPPORTS STAR WORKSHEET

In this section, you will think about different kinds of supports that will help you build your safety plan. Completing the star will help you think about your own life and the supports and resources you have available in each of the star categories that could help you recognize and stay safe from abuse, or be able to get away from an abusive situation.

You will need your blank Integrated Supports Star: Safety from Abuse worksheet.

First, in the center of the star, write "Safety Plan for [your name]".

The descriptions and examples that follow in this section will guide you through each part of the Integrated Supports Star.



PERSONAL ASSETS AND STRENGTHS

It's important to think about the things you have or own, skills or things you are good at, traits, knowledge and talents that could help you be safe from, or stop abuse.

List your know-how, skills, personality traits, and material or financial resources that could help you be safe from or stop abuse in the aqua part of the star.

EXAMPLES

- Calendar to keep track of anything you think might be abuse or doesn't feel right
- Has a personal safety plan in place
- Know where or when you feel safe or you don't feel safe
- Recognizes signs of unhealthy relationships or contact
- Has list of emergency contacts and hotline numbers



TECHNOLOGY

Everyone uses technology as part of daily life these days. How can technology be used to help you be safe from, or stop abuse?

List the technology you have available or use now in the pink part of the star. Remember, technology can be high tech, like a smart phone, or low tech, like a digital watch.

EXAMPLES

- Medical Alert device
- Hidden cell phone on mute with emergency numbers on speed dial
- Prearranged location trace when 911 is called
- Home/personal security system
- Motion detector/doorbell cameras





RELATIONSHIPS

Most of us rely on others in our life to give us advice, lend a hand, or be there for us when we need some support. How can people in your life help you be safe from or stop abuse?

List the people in your life (and if you'd like, their relationship to you) right now that either do or could do even one thing that would help you be safe from or stop abuse, in the purple part of the star.

EXAMPLES

- Code word to alert trusted family or friends when help is needed
- Workers or people at local stores, restaurants, etc.

Trusted Others Who:

- Provide information in a crisis
- You could stay with if unsafe at home
- Keep money, spare keys, extra clothes, papers, etc. for you



COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES

There are many places and activities that can be used simply by being a member of that particular community. Could participating in a community activity help you be safe from or stop abuse?

In the dark blue part of the star, list the places and activities that could help you be safe from or stop abuse.

EXAMPLES

- Identify safe places in the community
- Community domestic violence programs
- Support groups
- Local abuse related hotlines
- Local emergency responders
- Post office box for private mail communication



ELIGIBILITY SPECIFIC

Eligibility specific supports are resources you may be able to receive because of your income, age, diagnosis, disability, or other reasons. This might include formal paid DD supports, but can also consist of other options you might be eligible to receive based on various factors.

In the green part of the star, list the supports you are eligible for or currently receive that could help you be safe from or stop abuse.

EXAMPLES

- Medicaid, Medicaid waiver, SSI, SSDI
- Case workers/support coordinators
- Trusted support staff
- Domestic violence or sexual assault hotline
- Trusted person in the safety planning process





STATE ABUSE HOTLINES



Missouri Adult Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-392-0210

health.mo.gov/safety/abuse/

Responds to reports of abuse or neglect for adults with disabilities 18 years and older and adults 60 years and older without disabilities, living in the community or in long-term care facilities.



Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-392-3738

dss.mo.gov/cd/keeping-kids-safe/can.htm

Responds to reports of abuse and neglect of children and youth under the age of 18.



Missouri Medicaid Fraud Control Unit 1-800-286-3932

Responds to reports of financial abuse, neglect, or exploitation of persons who reside in nursing homes or board and care facilities.

NATIONAL AND STATE CRISIS LINES

If you have experienced an abuse and would like support and information about your options contact one of the following:

National Sexual Assault Hotline

RAINN provides 24/7 support, information, and referrals to local resources for individuals who have experienced sexual assault or abuse. You can call the 24/7 hotline **1-800-656-4673** or begin a live chat www.rainn.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Provides 24/7 support, information, and referrals to local resources for individuals who have experienced domestic violence or abuse from a partner. You can call the 24/7 hotline **1-800-799-7233** or begin a live chat at www.thehotline.org

Victim Connect

Provides information to crime victims about their rights and options. Their services are specifically designed to refer victims to the most appropriate local or national resources based on their experiences and needs. You can call the helpline **855-484-2846** or begin a live chat at www.Chat.VictimConnect.org

Deaf LEAD

Provides 24/7 crisis support through videophone and text for Deaf people. To speak with someone via video phone call **321-800-3323** or text **HAND to 839863**





RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ABUSE

- **It's Happening ... And We Can Stop It**

Provides information on the signs of abuse and neglect for people with disabilities, personal stories, and reporting information. www.andwecanstopit.org

- **Power and Control Wheel**

People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers – Provides examples of abuse and neglect of a person with a disability by a caregiver. www.ncdsv.org/images/DisabledCaregiverPCwheel.pdf

LEGAL SERVICES

- **Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services**

Provides protection of the rights of persons with disabilities through legally-based advocacy. www.moadvocacy.org

- **MOSAFE**

MOSAFE stands for Missourians Stopping Adult Financial Exploitation. They provide information and training on how to stop attempted or ongoing financial exploitation. health.mo.gov/seniors/mosafe/index.php

TECHNOLOGY

- **Missouri Assistive Technology**

Its mission is to increase access to assistive technology for Missourians with all types of disabilities, of all ages. www.at.mo.gov

- **LifeLine Response**

A safety alert app that uses a smartphones GPS to track and send police to your location. It does not require speaking to anyone, just pushing an alert button on your phone. www.llresponse.com

SAFETY PLANNING TOOLS

- **Safety Planning: A Guide for Individuals with Physical Disabilities**

Helps adults with physical disabilities who have been or may be abused by an intimate partner, spouse, adult child, or other family member, personal assistant or caregiver.

vawnet.org/material/safety-planning-guide-individuals-physical-disabilities

- **Safety Planning for Persons with Disabilities Advocate Guide**

Helps advocates working with survivors with disabilities plan for safety and provides a safety plan template.

www.endabusepwd.org/publications/safety-first-initiative-safety-planning-for-persons-with-disabilities-advocates-guide/

- **Safety Plan for People with Cognitive Disabilities**

Helps survivors with cognitive disabilities create a safety plan and a plan to leave when their situation is no longer safe. It includes consideration for being safe in the home, while leaving an abusive situation, safety at work, and safety when the person has a protection order.

www.endabusepwd.org/publications/project-care-safety-plan-cognitive-disabilities/





SUPPORT VIDEOS



What is the AA&P Guide & Who Should Use It Why this is Important

This video gives an overview about the information covered in the guide, who the guide is for and how to use it.

[www.lifecoursetools.com/
lifecourse-library/
exploring-the-life-domains/
abuse-awareness-and-
prevention/#aap-guide](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/#aap-guide)



How to Recognize Verbal Abuse

In this video, self-advocates discuss examples of verbal abuse. Information about how to seek help from abuse is provided at the end.

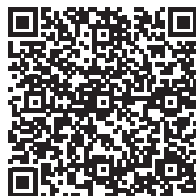
[www.lifecoursetools.com/
lifecourse-library/
exploring-the-life-domains/
abuse-awareness-and-
prevention/#verbalabuse](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/#verbalabuse)



How to Recognize Physical Abuse

In this video, self-advocates discuss examples of physical abuse. Information about how to seek help from abuse is provided at the end.

[www.lifecoursetools.com/
lifecourse-library/
exploring-the-life-domains/
abuse-awareness-and-
prevention/#physicalabuse](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/#physicalabuse)



How to Recognize Sexual Abuse

In this video, self-advocates discuss examples of sexual abuse. Information about how to seek help from abuse is provided at the end.

[www.lifecoursetools.com/
lifecourse-library/
exploring-the-life-domains/
abuse-awareness-and-
prevention/#sexualabuse](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/#sexualabuse)



How to Recognize Financial Abuse

In this video, self-advocates discuss examples of financial abuse. Information about how to seek help from abuse is provided at the end.

[www.lifecoursetools.com/
lifecourse-library/
exploring-the-life-domains/
abuse-awareness-and-
prevention/#financialabuse](http://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/abuse-awareness-and-prevention/#financialabuse)





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For the Complete Curriculum - LifeCourseTools.com

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Additional resources that informed the AAP Guide:

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Khemka, I., & Hickson, L. (2008). ESCAPE-DD: An effective strategy-based curriculum for abuse prevention and empowerment for adults with developmental disabilities. New York, NY: Center for Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council. (2020, August 26). It's happening. It's Happening and We Can Stop It Campaign. www.andwecanstopit.org

Safe Place. (2020, August 26). Power and control wheel: People with disabilities in partner relationships. Retrieved from: http://www.ncdsv.org/images/SafePlace_PowerControlWheelDisabilities_2011.pdf

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2020, August 26). Power and control wheel: People with disabilities and their caregivers. Retrieved from <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/DisabledCaregiverPCwheel.pdf>