

Expectations for Supports Coordinators (SCs) Regarding the Right to be Free from Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation

ODP Announcement 23-091

AUDIENCE:

Individuals and Families, Administrative Entities (AEs) Administrators and Directors, County Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Program Directors, Supports Coordination Organizations (SCOs), SCs, and Providers of the Consolidated, Community Living, Person/Family Directed Support (P/FDS) and Adult Autism Waivers.

PURPOSE:

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) previously issued several announcements regarding the expectations of SCs informing individuals about abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This announcement ensures that all applicable resources related to this topic are included in one communication.

BACKGROUND:

ODP is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its' program participants. As part of this ongoing commitment, ODP is making additional resources available for SCOs to focus discussions around an individual's rights to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This task aligns with the Information Sharing and Advisory Committee's (ISAC) Recommendation #5: Promote Health, Wellness, and Safety.

DISCUSSION:

SCOs are required to inform individuals about abuse, neglect, and exploitation. SCs must advise individuals about the protections available to them. It is critically important for SCs to discuss and inform individuals of their rights to be free from abuse. Individuals with disabilities are at higher risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Estimates show that abuse and violence against individuals with disabilities occurs at rates two to three times the general public. Rates are even higher for people with multiple disabilities¹.

PROCESS:

At a minimum, at least one of the Right to be Free from Abuse handouts must be reviewed annually with all individuals. The discussion must be recorded as an action by the SC in the Monitoring Tool in the Home and Community Services Information System (HCSIS).

Documentation of this activity is **not** satisfied by strictly answering “Yes” to the question of: *“Was the individual/surrogate advised of the right to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in a location where she or he feels comfortable disclosing concerns AND information was provided as to whom and how to report abuse, neglect and exploitation?”* SCs must record detailed information outlining completion of all steps listed below. To meet ODP’s expectation, the following must occur:

- The SC must provide and discuss at least one of the following handouts, based on what would best meet the needs of the individual and establish a place where the individual may readily access it:

¹ [The Issue - End Abuse of People with Disabilities \(endabusepwd.org\)](https://endabusepwd.org/)

- ["It is wrong for anyone to hurt you" pamphlet](#)
- [Easy read handout](#)
- [Plain language handout](#)
- [Handout for children](#)
- In a location where the individual feels comfortable disclosing concerns, and discussing the meaning of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
 - Due to the sensitivity of this topic, ODP strongly recommends that SCs have these conversations during an inperson monitoring.
 - The discussion must take place in a format understood by the individual and using the means of communication that the individual prefers.
- Advise the individual/surrogate that they have the right:
 - To be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation
 - To report abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Discuss with whom the individual may report (such as family members, friends, SCs, Disability Rights of Pennsylvania, protective service organizations, law enforcement, etc.)
- Advise the individual that they can report abuse, neglect, and exploitation to another person, if the first person they notified failed to take action

- After the meeting, the SC must document the conversation in an SC Monitoring Tool in HCSIS. The documentation must:
 - Include the date the conversation occurred
 - Clearly indicate that the conversation took place in a location where the individual feels comfortable disclosing concerns.
- As part of the ongoing monitoring process, SCs should revisit the discussion with the individual to ensure that they continue to feel safe, remember the handout, and have access to it.

If an individual discloses any allegation, the SC must be prepared to take all necessary actions to ensure that the individual's immediate health and safety needs are being addressed per ODP policy and according to law.

Additional resources:

- Tell Someone wallet card
- [Communication board](#)
- [Tips for talking to children infographic](#)
- ASERT has various infographics, social stories, and eLearning courses available: [ASERT](#)
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website, how to report suspected abuse of children and adults: [Fraud and Abuse \(pa.gov\)](#)
- Adult Protective Services: [APS Media Toolkit \(pa.gov\)](#)

- [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(PaCDV\)](#)
- [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape \(PCAR\)](#)

This Announcement obsoletes ODP Announcements 22-082, 19-094, and 105-18.

CONTACT:

SCs should send questions about this communication to RA-PWODP_OUTREACH@pa.gov. Adult Autism Waiver SCs should contact the appropriate ODP regional office.

ATTACHMENTS:

- **It is Wrong for Anyone to Touch You! Pamphlet**
- **Easy to Read Handout April 2023**
- **Tell Someone if Anyone Plain Language**
- **What Kids Need to Know Handout**
- **Is Someone Hurting You Communication Board**
- **Tips for Talking to Children infographic**