

# Adult Abuse

## 313.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the investigation and reporting of suspected abuse of certain adults who may be more vulnerable than others.

### 313.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Adult abuse** - Any offense or attempted offense involving violence or neglect of an adult victim when committed by a person responsible for the adult's care.

## 313.2 POLICY

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office will investigate all reported incidents of alleged adult abuse within its jurisdiction and/or refer to the appropriate local police agency as needed and ensure proper reporting and notification as required by law.

## 313.3 NOTIFICATION

Members of the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office should notify the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency when a deputy takes a report of adult abuse of an elder at risk or adult at risk.

For purposes of notification, an "elder adult at risk" is any person who is 60 years of age or older who has experienced, is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect or financial exploitation (Wis. Stat. § 46.90(1)(br)). An "adult at risk" is any adult 18 years of age or older who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his/her ability to care for his/her own needs, and who has experienced, is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect or financial exploitation (Wis. Stat. § 55.01(1)(1e)).

Members should immediately notify the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Division of Quality Assurance, Office of Caregiver Quality regarding an adult who was abused in a care facility or while under the care of a facility.

## 313.4 QUALIFIED INVESTIGATORS

Qualified investigators should be available to investigate cases of adult abuse. These investigators should:

- (a) Conduct interviews in appropriate interview facilities.
- (b) Be familiar with forensic interview techniques specific to adult abuse investigations.
- (c) Present all cases of alleged adult abuse to the prosecutor for review.
- (d) Coordinate with other enforcement agencies, social service agencies and facility administrators as needed.
- (e) Provide referrals to therapy services, victim advocates, guardians and support for the victim and family as appropriate.

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- (f) Participate in or coordinate with multidisciplinary investigative teams as applicable (Wis. Stat. § 46.90(5)(c); Wis. Stat. § 55.043(2)).

### **313.5 INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTING**

All reported or suspected cases of adult abuse require investigation and a report, even if the allegations appear unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Investigations and reports related to suspected cases of adult abuse should address, as applicable:

- (a) The overall basis for the contact. This should be done by the investigating deputy in all circumstances where a suspected adult abuse victim is contacted.
- (b) Any relevant statements the victim may have made and to whom he/she made the statements.
- (c) If a person is taken into protective custody, the reasons, the name and title of the person making the decision, and why other alternatives were not appropriate.
- (d) Documentation of any visible injuries or any injuries identified by the victim. This should include photographs of such injuries, if practicable.
- (e) Whether the victim was transported for medical treatment or a medical examination.
- (f) Whether the victim identified a household member as the alleged perpetrator, and a list of the names of any other potential victims or witnesses who may reside in the residence.
- (g) Identification of any prior related reports or allegations of abuse, including other jurisdictions, as reasonably known.
- (h) Previous addresses of the victim and suspect.
- (i) Other potential witnesses who have not yet been interviewed, such as relatives or others close to the victim's environment.

Any unexplained death of an adult who was in the care of a guardian or caretaker should be considered as potential adult abuse and investigated similarly.

#### **313.5.1 REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE**

If requested, a member shall accompany an investigator or worker of an elder-adult-at-risk agency or an adult-at-risk agency during visits to a residence of a victim and provide assistance as requested or necessary when (Wis. Stat. § 46.90(5)(c); Wis. Stat. § 55.043(2)):

- (a) The investigator or worker is investigating suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect or financial exploitation.
- (b) The victim is 60 years of age or older or is 18 years of age or older and has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his/her ability to care for his/her own needs.

The identity of the requesting investigator/worker should be documented.

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### **313.6 PROTECTIVE CUSTODY**

Before taking an adult abuse victim into protective custody when facts indicate the adult may not be able to care for him/herself, the deputy should make reasonable attempts to contact the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency. Generally, removal of an adult abuse victim from his/her family, guardian or other responsible adult should be left to the welfare authorities when they are present or have become involved in an investigation.

Generally, members of this agency should remove an adult abuse victim from his/her family or guardian without a court order only when no other effective alternative is reasonably available and immediate action reasonably appears necessary to protect the victim. Prior to taking an adult abuse victim into protective custody, the deputy should take reasonable steps to deliver the adult to another qualified legal guardian, unless it reasonably appears that the release would endanger the victim or result in abduction. If this is not a reasonable option, the deputy shall ensure that the adult is delivered to the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency.

Whenever practicable, the deputy should inform a supervisor of the circumstances prior to taking an adult abuse victim into protective custody. If prior notification is not practicable, deputies should contact a supervisor promptly after taking the adult into protective custody.

When adult abuse victims are under state control, have a state-appointed guardian or there are other legal holdings for guardianship, it may be necessary or reasonable to seek a court order on behalf of the adult victim to either remove the adult from a dangerous environment (protective custody) or restrain a person from contact with the adult.

### **313.7 INTERVIEWS**

#### **313.7.1 PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS**

Absent extenuating circumstances or impracticality, deputies should audio record the preliminary interview with a suspected adult abuse victim. Deputies should avoid multiple interviews with the victim and should attempt to gather only the information necessary to begin an investigation. When practicable, investigating deputies should defer interviews until a person who is specially trained in such interviews is available.

#### **313.7.2 DETAINING VICTIMS FOR INTERVIEWS**

A deputy should not detain an adult involuntarily who is suspected of being a victim of abuse solely for the purpose of an interview or physical exam without his/her consent or the consent of a guardian unless one of the following applies:

- (a) Exigent circumstances exist, such as:
  - 1. A reasonable belief that medical issues of the adult need to be addressed immediately.
  - 2. A reasonable belief that the adult is or will be in danger of harm if the interview or physical exam is not immediately completed.

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3. The alleged offender is a family member or guardian and there is reason to believe the adult may be in continued danger.
- (b) A court order or warrant has been issued.

### **313.8 MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS**

When an adult abuse investigation requires a medical examination, the investigating deputy should obtain consent for such examination from the victim, guardian, agency or entity having legal custody of the adult. The deputy should also arrange for the adult's transportation to the appropriate medical facility.

In cases where the alleged offender is a family member, guardian, agency or entity having legal custody and is refusing to give consent for the medical examination, deputies should notify a supervisor before proceeding. If exigent circumstances do not exist or if state law does not provide for deputies to take the adult for a medical examination, the supervisor should consider other government agencies or services that may obtain a court order for such an examination.

### **313.9 DRUG-ENDANGERED VICTIMS**

A coordinated response by law enforcement and social services agencies is appropriate to meet the immediate and longer-term medical and safety needs of an adult abuse victim who has been exposed to the manufacturing, trafficking or use of narcotics.

#### **313.9.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Criminal Investigations Division supervisor should:

- (a) Work with professionals from the appropriate agencies, including the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency, other law enforcement agencies, medical service providers and local prosecutors, to develop community-specific procedures for responding to situations where there are adult abuse victims endangered by exposure to methamphetamine labs or the manufacture and trafficking of other drugs.
- (b) Activate any available interagency response when a deputy notifies the Criminal Investigations Division supervisor that he/she has responded to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where an adult abuse victim is present or where evidence indicates that an adult abuse victim lives.

#### **313.9.2 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Deputies responding to a drug lab or other narcotics crime scene where an adult abuse victim is present or where there is evidence that an adult abuse victim lives should:

- (a) Document the environmental, medical, social and other conditions of the adult, using photography as appropriate and the checklist or form developed for this purpose.
- (b) Notify the Criminal Investigations Division supervisor so an interagency response can begin.

### **313.10 STATE MANDATES AND OTHER RELEVANT LAWS**

Wisconsin requires or permits the following:

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### **313.10.1 OPEN RECORDS UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Open Records is responsible for:

- (a) Providing a copy of the adult abuse report to the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency as required by law.
- (b) Retaining the original adult abuse report with the initial case file.

### **313.10.2 RELEASE OF REPORTS**

Information related to incidents of adult abuse or suspected adult abuse shall be confidential and may only be disclosed pursuant to state law and the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

### **313.10.3 RESTRAINING ORDER**

When a deputy reasonably believes that an elder adult or adult at risk is in immediate and present danger of abuse based on an allegation of a recent incident of abuse or threat of abuse (other than financial abuse alone), the deputy should contact the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency and request that they obtain a restraining order against the person alleged to have committed or threatened such abuse, if that person is not in custody (Wis. Stat. § 813.123).

If the appropriate county elder-adult/adult-at-risk agency is unwilling or unable to obtain a restraining order, the handling deputy may attempt to obtain the restraining order on the victim's behalf. Action taken by the deputy should be documented in any related report.

### **313.11 TRAINING**

The Agency should provide training on best practices in adult abuse investigations to members tasked with investigating these cases. The training should include:

- (a) Participating in multidisciplinary investigations, as appropriate.
- (b) Conducting interviews.
- (c) Availability of therapy services for adults and families.
- (d) Availability of specialized forensic medical exams.
- (e) Cultural competence (including interpretive services) related to adult abuse investigations.
- (f) Availability of victim advocates or other support.