What is elder abuse?

• Elder abuse refers to the commission or omission of any act that endangers the welfare or safety of the elderly persons.

• Generally, abusers are those having the responsibility to take care of or having acquaintance with the elderly victims, such as family members living with them or staff of service providers responsible for taking care of them.

Physical abuse

• Physical abuse is a physical injury or suffering inflicted on an elderly person non-accidentally or due to the lack of preventive measures.

Psychological abuse

• Physical abuse is a pattern of behaviour and/or attitudes towards an elderly person that endangers or impairs his/her psychological health, including acts of insult, scolding, isolation, causing constant fear to him/her for a long duration, intrusion into his/her privacy and unnecessary restriction of his/her freedom of access and movement.

Financial abuse

• Financial abuse is any act which involves depriving an elderly person of his/her wealth, or not acting in his/her interests, including getting an elderly person’s possessions, money or assets (such as property and public housing tenancy) without his/her consent.

Neglect and Abandonment

• Neglect is severe or persistent lack of attention to an elderly person’s basic needs (such as adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment and nursing care) that endangers or impairs his/her health or safety.

• Neglect also includes the lack of provision of medicine and auxiliary equipment according to medical advice, which causes physical harm to an elderly person.

• If a formal service provider (e.g. Residential Care Home for the Elderly, Integrated Home Care Services Team, hospital, etc) fails to perform its caring responsibility and causes harm to an elderly person, the case may also be considered as neglect.

• Abandonment is the act of abandoning an elderly person committed by a carer or guard without justifiable reasons, which endangers or impairs the elderly person physically or psychologically. For example, a family member gives a wrong residential address to the hospital upon admission of an elderly person and makes it impossible for the hospital to contact him/her to discuss the medical and welfare issues of the elderly person.

Sexual abuse

• Sexual abuse is the act of sexual assault on an elderly person (such as exposure of sexual organs to an elderly person, indecent assault and rape).

How can we help the elderly suffering from abuse?

• Victims of elder abuse or those who know them should seek assistance of relevant professionals (such as social workers, medical personnel and police officers) as early as possible so as to remedy the situation.

• Professionals of various disciplines will offer assistance to any elderly person who is being abused. Whenever necessary, they will join hands to work out appropriate welfare plans for the elderly persons and their family members through discussions or case conferences.

• Professionals will respect the views of the elderly persons as far as possible and provide them with protection and assistance in the most appropriate manner.

• Bearing in mind that the safety of the elderly persons is the prime concern, professionals will also help abusers solve their personal or family problems and, where possible, will try their best to help the elderly persons improve their relationship with their family members, including the abusers.

How to seek assistance?

• Persons in need of assistance may approach District Elderly Community Centres and Integrated Family Service Centres/Integrated Services Centres in respective districts.

• Telephone numbers for enquiries and addresses of these centres are available on the Social Welfare Department website at http://www.swd.gov.hk/

• If the abused elderly person is receiving other social services, he/she may seek assistance from the social worker of the service unit concerned, who may arrange referrals where necessary.

• Social Welfare Department Hotline : 2343 2255

• Family Crisis Support Centre (24-hour hotline) : 18288

• CEASE Crisis Centre 24-hour Hotline : 18281

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