How can I Protect Myself?

- You have the **right to be safe** and to be treated with respect.
- You have the **right to decide** who will touch your body, and how and when it happens.
- Remember that you have the **right to say “no”** to any unwanted touch, even from a boyfriend or girlfriend, caregiver, attendant, family member, health care provider or other person in your life.
- You have the **right to say STOP** to the touching whenever you want, even if it felt good at first.
- If someone hurts you, makes you feel bad about yourself, or touches you in a way you do not like, **tell someone you trust**. If the first person does not help, tell someone else!
- If someone you know takes your money or things, **they are not being a friend**! Tell someone you trust!
- **Say NO! Then GO TELL!**

Who Can Help?

- Someone in your family
- Someone who helps you at work or at home
- Your doctor or therapist
- Someone at church

Resources

- **Important numbers to report abuse**:
  - 911
  - Florida: 1-800-96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)
    TDD: 1-800-453-5145
  - Ohio
    1-266-313-6733
    Fax: 614-995-3822

Information provided by:
Florida Center for Inclusive Communities at University of South Florida, and Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University, both University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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For more information or to order additional copies visit http://fffcic.org or http://nisonger.osu.edu/bhip/
Personal Safety

What Should I Look For?

Signs of abuse or neglect:
- Bruises, cuts, burns, grip marks
- Any injury that is unusual, unexplained, or the explanation does not make sense
- Any injury that has not been properly treated (sometimes injuries are hidden on areas of the body normally covered by clothing)
- Genital pain or itching, or sexually transmitted diseases

Also, pay attention to changes in behavior!
- Suddenly scared of certain people, a specific gender, or certain situations
- Sudden fear of bathing or toileting
- Changes in personal hygiene
- Sleep problems, nightmares
- Sudden use of rude, abusive, or threatening language
- Signs of helplessness, unwilling to talk openly, fear, depression, agitation, nervousness, or confusion
- Unusually disobedient or overly obedient behavior
- Sexually inappropriate behaviors, masturbation, or new interest in sex
- Hints about sexual activity and a new or detailed understanding of sexual behavior

What Can I Do?

- If you have seen any of these signs and are concerned about someone you know, do not wait—do something!
- Document everything; bruises, cuts, scratches, etc...as soon as you notice it. Write down where on the body the injury is located, whether it is an old or new injury, and a possible explanation of how it happened.
- Take notes on any new or unusual patterns of behavior.
- Talk with someone you trust (like a supervisor or case manager).
- Report your concern! You could end terrible suffering and even save a life!

The Problem

People with disabilities, children, and the elderly are especially likely to be abused, neglected, and exploited.

Did you know that almost 90% of children and adults with developmental disabilities are abused or exploited at some point in their life?

People with disabilities are at risk because:
- They depend on others for basic needs
- They are taught to cooperate with “people in charge” like staff members
- They often live in group settings and can’t choose roommates or caregivers

People with disabilities may not report abuse, neglect, or exploitation because they:
- Feel guilty, ashamed, and/or love for the person that hurt them
- Do not want to make the abuser mad or get them in trouble
- Do not know how to get help
- Do not even know they are being abused!

The abuser can be anyone but is usually someone the victim knows well, such as a caregiver, friend, family member, or spouse!

Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual. Taking your money or things (Financial exploitation) is abuse too!

Reporting Abuse & Exploitation

Note: If you know that a life is in immediate danger due to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, you should call 911 before calling anyone else.

- Ohio residents: Call the MR/DD Abuse Hotline at 1(866)313-6733 or send a faxed statement to the Abuse Hotline’s statewide toll-free fax number, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 1-614-995-3866
- Florida residents: Call the Florida Abuse Hotline, a nationwide, toll-free telephone number, at 1(800)96-ABUSE or 1(800)962-2873 (TDD: 1-800-453-5145)