

SUSPECTED ABUSE

If you have any questions regarding abuse or neglect you may contact Ms. Sandra Leatherwood, RN at 903-583-6393 (Bonham) or Ms. Carolyn Mize, RN at 214-857-70463 (Dallas and Ft. Worth). You may also contact them by sending an e-mail message.

1. VANTHCS Memorandum No. CC-22, Identification and Reporting Suspected Abuse In The Elderly, The Disabled, and Spouses describes the policies and procedures for the handling of alleged or suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of the elderly, disabled veterans, family members or significant others that occur outside the institution. It is the responsibility of all employees to report suspected cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation to appropriate clinical staff. Clinical staff will then assess the individual according to the criteria listed in the attachments of Memorandum No. CC -22.

2. Medical Center Memorandum No. CC-22 addresses the identification and assessment of possible victims of abuse and neglect. It also describes interventions, including appropriate medical care, obtaining the victim's consent for photographs or collection of evidence, responsibility for collection of evidence, notification of proper authorities, referral to assisting agencies and education of staff. When abuse is suspected, the collection of evidence of abuse should be referred to law enforcement officials.

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4. Abuse is defined as the infliction of physical or psychological injury to the elderly or disabled veterans or spouses or the failure of a caregiver to take reasonable measures to prevent the occurrence of physical or psychological injury.

5. Neglect is the failure or omission of the caregiver to provide the care and services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of the elderly or disabled veterans or spouses. Neglect includes, but is not limited to, providing provisions of appropriate food, clothing, medicine, supervision and medical services.

6. Exploitation is defined as the improper or illegal use or management of an elderly or disabled veteran's funds, assets, or property. Exploitation is also described as the use of an elderly or disabled veteran's power of attorney or guardianship for another's or one's own profit or advantage. Additional examples are described in VA Memorandum CC - 22 Attachment 3, Indicators of Elder Abuse. Exploitative indicators of abuse in the elderly include refusing to spend money on their care or not spending money for amenities and comfort items when the estate can financially support this type of assistance.

7. All employees are required to report cases where there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation as mandated by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

8. Reporting cases of suspected neglect is required by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

9. In the event that abuse of the elderly, the disabled veteran, spouses or others is suspected, an assessment of the case will be documented in a progress note by clinical staff. Upon written consent by the victim, clinical staff may collect any possible evidence, specimens, photographs, and other evidentiary material. However, when possible, collection of evidence should be left for law enforcement officials. All photographs or other evidence are to be submitted to the Chief, Operations and Records Control Section of Medical Administration Service (MAS).

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11. Examples of abuse/neglect include burning, beating, fracture, abandonment, malnutrition or lack of supervision.

12. Criteria for elderly or disabled veteran and spousal abuse/neglect are listed on Attachment 1, Reporting Form of VANTHCS Memorandum No. CC-22. The criteria includes episodes of injury not fully explained by history, new or recurrent injury (fracture or burn), presence of more than one fracture, especially if in separate stages of healing, clear marks of cigarette burns, heater elements, human bites, belt buckles, advanced underlying disease, subdural hematoma (bruises) or trauma involving genital or perianal areas. Also included in the criteria of abuse are malnutrition, and advanced stages of infection/disease resulting from delays in seeking medical advice.

13. In the event that abuse is suspected, the procedures and reporting form in VANTHCS Memorandum No. CC-22 should be completed. A progress note should be made by the clinical staff detailing the suspected abuse. Upon completion of the reporting form and progress note, the Chief, Office Operations and Records Control Section or in his/her absence the Chief, Medical Administration Service or Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD) will report the incident to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The 24 hour state telephone hotline for reporting suspected abuse is 1-800-252-5400. In Dallas County the telephone number is 214-951-7902 and in Fannin County the telephone number is 903-583-5535.