



# RECOGNIZING INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

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# Introductions

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- Name
- Agency/organization
- Age
- What it is like for you being this age



Why are we here?

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# Importance of this topic

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- Cases of reported abuse are rising
- Aging of America
- 20% of population over age 5 has a major disability



# How big is the problem?

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- ??? – few studies/little data
- Risk of abuse for persons with disabilities is thought to be twice as high (Sobsey)



# Participants will understand:

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- How to recognize abuse
- The dynamics of abuse
  - Forms of abuse
  - Why abuse occurs
  - Barriers to victim safety
- How to respond to abuse



# What is abuse?

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- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Financial exploitation
- Neglect
- Abandonment, confinement



# Elder Abuse

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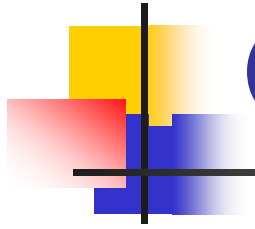
- Age: 60+
- Gender: 2/3 female, 1/3 male
- Relationship: Partner, family, caregiver
- Location: Community or facility



# Abuse Against People with Disabilities

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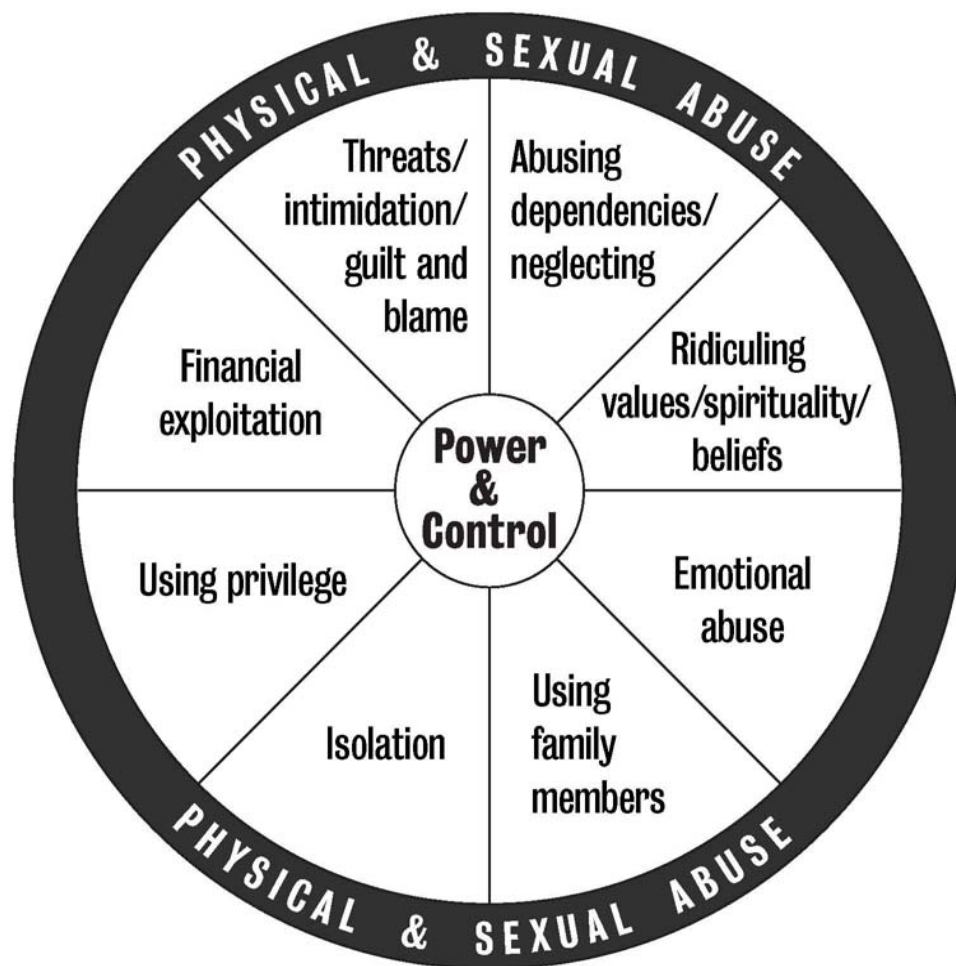
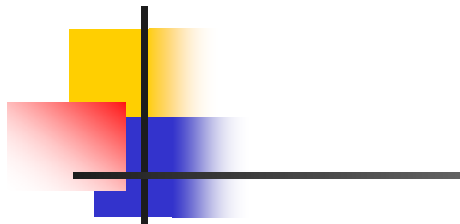
- Age: 18+
- Gender: Female and male
- Relationship: Partner, family, caregiver
- Location: Community or facility



# CHARTING NEW WATERS

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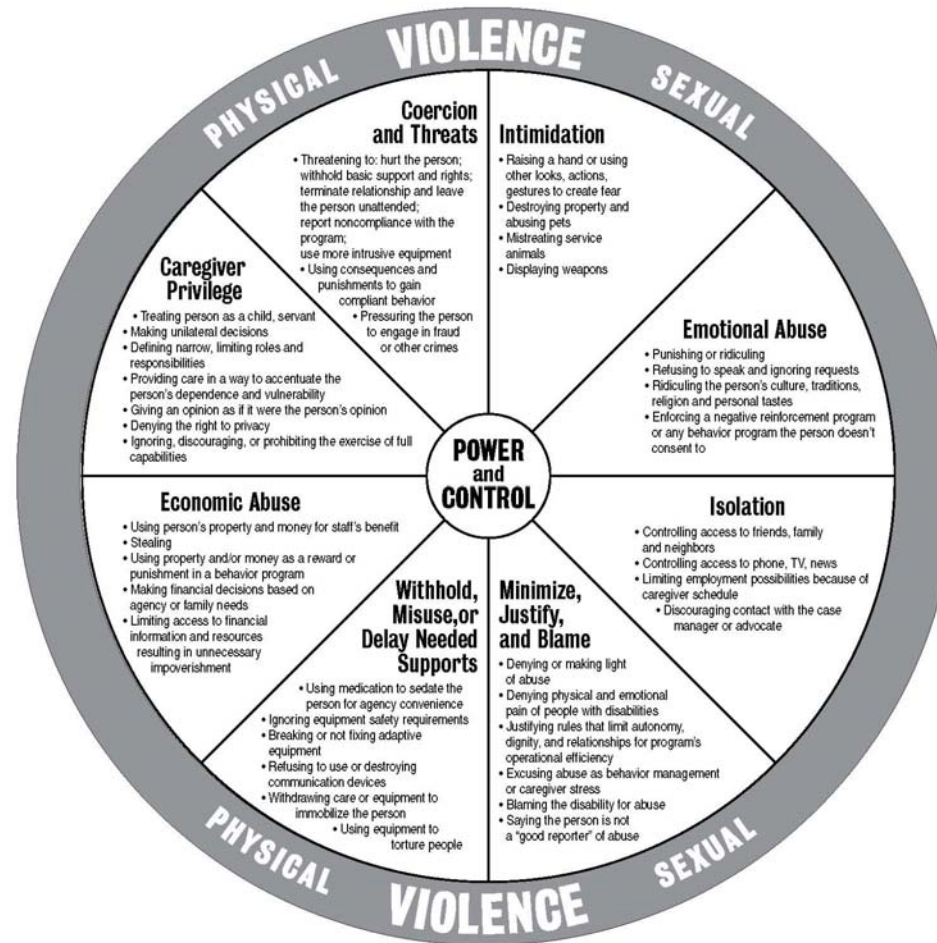
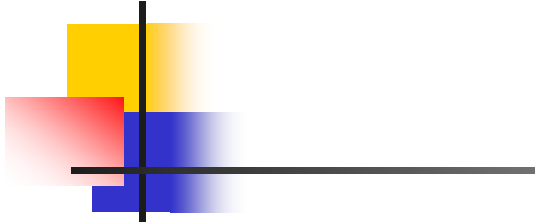
# Family Violence in Later Life



Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
307 S. Paterson St., Suite 1, Madison, WI 53703  
(608) 255-0539 / FAX: (608) 255-3560

*This diagram is based on the Power and Control/Equality wheels developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, MN*

# Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities by a Caregiver



Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
 307 S. Paterson St., Suite 1, Madison, WI 53703  
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*This diagram is based on the Power and Control/Equality wheels developed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project, Duluth, MN*



# Behavior Indicators - victim

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- Explanation does not match injuries
- Isolated
- Looks to abuser before speaking
- Nervous, anxious, afraid
- Chronic, unidentified health problems
- Missed appointments
- Coded disclosures



# Behavioral Indicators - Abuser

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- May be calm and charming
- May be angry and threatening
- Often manipulates and blames the victim
- Speaks for victim
- Makes impossible rules
- Monitors mail, calls, visitors - isolates
- Threatens victim, pets and other loved ones



# Why abuse occurs?

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- Mostly power and control
- Sometimes organic causes
- Abusers' excuses



# Why abuse occurs? Jimmy

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# Caregiver Stress and Abuse

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Concept: well-intended caregiver becomes overwhelmed and becomes abusive.



# Caregiver Stress and Abuse

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- Research doesn't support as primary cause
- Caregiver distress rather than abuse
- In DV, excuse rather than causal factor



# Implications

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- Blames the victim
- Unwittingly colludes with the batterer
- Interventions may not be effective or dangerous
- Does not recognize importance of changing systems and societal values



# Blames the Victim

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- Myth: If victim would be less difficult to care for, abuse would not occur.
- Reality: Abusers are responsible for own behavior



# Collusion with Abuser: Common Justifications

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- “She is so hard to care for.”
- “It was an accident. I’m doing the best I can.”
- She makes me so mad. She deserved it.”
- I’m the victim. You don’t know what I have to put up with.”



## Consider:

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- Everyone experience stress.
- Most people apologize for “bad moments.” – not a pattern
- Abusers don’t harm everyone.
- Abuser not out of control.
- Pattern of behavior with a goal.



# Abusers:

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- Lie
- Manipulate
- Justify their behavior
- Blame the victim
- Try to get away with their behavior



# Issues that co-exist but do not cause abuse

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- Stress
- Substance abuse
- Anger
- Dysfunctional families
- Poor caregiving strategies
- Poor family communication



# Interventions to Reconsider

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- Confidentiality practices
- Anger management
- Couples or family counseling
- Home visits
- Abuser interviews and notification
- Collateral interviews



# Focus on Victim Safety

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- Is the victim safer?
- Do interventions promote breaking isolation and empowering victims?
- Have any interventions raised risks?



Nancy





# Barriers Victims Face

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- List as many barriers to living from abuse as possible in 2 minutes.



# Responding to Abuse

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- Call 911 if life threatening situation
- Make sure health care needs are met
- Call domestic violence/sexual assault program
- APS
- Programs to break isolation and provide information



# What to do

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- **T**ake time to listen
- **R**espect the victim
- **U**nderstand how difficult this is
- **S**upport the victim's decision
- **T**ell the victim help is available



# What to do

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- Offer hope
- Recognize the importance of cultural, spiritual and generational values
- Understand that systems are often not prepared to help as much as needed



## SMALL GROUP: Work a Case

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- **R**ecognize: List possible signs of abuse.
- **R**espond: What could you do or say?
- **R**eferrals: List possible referrals.



# National Resources

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- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE
- Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network 1-800-656-HOPE
- National Center on Elder Abuse  
[www.elderabusecenter.org](http://www.elderabusecenter.org)



# Bonnie Brandl

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- [www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us)
- [www.wcadv.org](http://www.wcadv.org)
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