



Tool Box Topic – Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of the elderly and infirmed is an issue that is often ignored or overlooked in the healthcare arena, but one that does exist in the home healthcare sector. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this abuse is that the victims are often not physically or mentally capable of protecting themselves and may not be able to communicate to others that an assault has taken place. Conversely, there may be situations where a client in the care of a Homewatch CareGivers provider makes comments that are deemed to be of a sexual nature. This, too, can be construed to be a form of sexual abuse.

Quite simply, any actions that can be construed to be of a sexual nature between any employee of the Homewatch CareGivers network and the clients under their care are strictly prohibited. There is no situation that would justify a Homewatch CareGivers employee from engaging in any such activities. It is understood that certain work activities that may be a part of the routine services provided, such as assisting clients in their bathing and toilet activities, require the caregiver to be in close proximity to their clients while they are in a compromised situation. As such, the Homewatch CareGivers employee must be certain to maintain a professional attitude and bearing at all times when performing these activities. If, at any time, a client suggests that they feel uncomfortable or if they make comments that can be construed to be of a sexual nature, it is imperative that the caregiver immediately remove themselves from the situation and contact their supervisor. Any actions that constitute a physical assault should be brought to the attention of the proper law enforcement authorities.

One other area where an employee may encounter instances of sexual abuse can involve assaults by third parties. This may involve a family member, a third party provider or some outside party. It is possible that signs of abuse may be apparent during the routine care of the client. These may include physical signs of bleeding or bruising of genitalia, scratching or abrasions and unexplained injuries as well as mental signs including denial or depression, fear of being touched or sudden fear of certain people. There can be other causes for these symptoms, but they should be discussed with the client or their representative/guardian. This is a very difficult and sensitive area, but one that Homewatch CareGivers must be aware of. Again, if you feel there has been some instance involving of sexual abuse it is imperative that you report this to your supervisor immediately.



Courses on [Homewatch CareGivers University](#) that support the training of caregivers with regards to abuse are:

- P1037A A Closer Look at Elder Abuse
- USS-1000 Abuse and Neglect
- P1103 Sexual Harassment – It’s a matter of Respect
- P1229AD Zero Tolerance: Abuse of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities