

MODULE 08

Reporting Requirements & Incident Reporting

Your Legal Obligations as a Mandatory Reporter

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

Learning Objectives

- 01 Define mandatory reporter obligations under Ohio law
- 02 Identify signs of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- 03 Complete all required notification steps after an incident
- 04 Distinguish between incidents requiring 911 vs. supervisor notification only
- 05 Explain the non-retaliation protections for reporters

OHIO LAW

You Are a Mandatory Reporter

Under Ohio Revised Code §5101.61, any person who suspects that an adult 60 or older is being abused, neglected, or exploited **must report it** within 24 hours.

You do not need proof. Reasonable suspicion is enough.

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

Signs of Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the intentional use of force that results in pain, injury, or impairment.

- Unexplained bruising, burns, or welts
- Injuries inconsistent with the explanation given
- Grip-pattern bruising on arms, wrists, or neck
- Patient appears fearful or flinches when touched
- Caregiver or family member refuses to leave patient alone with you
- Repeated "accidents" with no reasonable explanation

If you see it, you report it. It is not your job to investigate or prove anything.

RECOGNIZING NEGLECT

Signs of Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a caregiver to provide the necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision.

- Soiled clothing or bedding left unchanged for extended periods
- Signs of dehydration — dry mouth, cracked lips, confusion
- Unexplained weight loss or malnutrition
- Unmet medical needs — untreated wounds, missed medications
- Poor living conditions — no heat, pest infestation, hazardous clutter
- Patient left alone when supervision is required

OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

Emotional Abuse & Financial Exploitation

EMOTIONAL / VERBAL ABUSE

- Patient appears fearful of a family member or caregiver
- Patient flinches or cowers when spoken to
- Patient is not allowed to speak freely
- Patient reports feeling "worthless" or "a burden"
- Threats of punishment, isolation, or institutionalization

FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

- Unpaid bills despite adequate income
- Sudden changes in bank accounts or wills
- Missing valuables or personal belongings
- New people suddenly controlling finances
- Patient signing documents they don't understand

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of vulnerable adults is underreported and can be difficult to identify. Be alert to these signs:

- Unexplained injuries to genital area
- Torn, stained, or bloody undergarments
- Patient reports unwanted sexual contact
- Sudden behavioral changes — withdrawal, fear of specific people
- Difficulty walking or sitting without explanation

If a patient discloses abuse, listen, believe, document their words exactly, and report immediately.

STEP BY STEP

The Reporting Process

- 01 **You notice signs** of possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- 02 **Call your supervisor immediately** — do not wait until end of shift
- 03 **Call Ohio Adult Protective Services: 1-855-644-6277** (county DJFS) within 24 hours
- 04 **Document your objective observations** in the visit note — what you saw, what you heard, exact quotes
- 05 **Cooperate with any investigation** that follows

Filing an APS report is **YOUR individual legal obligation** — not just the supervisor's.

CRITICAL POINT

What If the Abuser Is a NobleCare Employee?

Your reporting obligation does not change based on who the suspected abuser is. If you suspect a fellow caregiver or staff member is abusing a patient:

- 01 Contact your supervisor **AND** Adult Protective Services
- 02 The agency will immediately remove the accused from patient contact
- 03 An investigation will be conducted
- 04 **No retaliation** will occur against you for reporting in good faith

Loyalty to a colleague never outweighs your duty to protect a patient. Report anyway.

BEYOND ABUSE REPORTING

Other Required Reports

INCIDENT	ACTION REQUIRED
Fall with injury	Supervisor notification within 1 hour; incident report before end of shift
Medication error	Call supervisor immediately; physician notification as directed
Patient not home	Call supervisor after 15 minutes; do not leave without attempting contact
You feel unsafe	Leave the home if necessary; call supervisor and 911 if appropriate

Your safety comes first. You always have the right to leave a situation where you feel physically threatened.

DECISION GUIDE

When to Call 911 vs. Supervisor Only

CALL 911 FIRST

- Fall with suspected fracture or head injury
- Patient unresponsive or not breathing
- Chest pain, stroke symptoms, severe bleeding
- Active threat to your safety or patient's safety
- Patient expressing suicidal intent

SUPERVISOR CALL FIRST

- Minor fall with no apparent injury
- Missed medication (non-critical)
- Behavioral changes or new confusion
- Skin breakdown or new wound observed
- Family conflict affecting care delivery

When in doubt, call 911. You will never be disciplined for erring on the side of patient safety.

DOCUMENTING INCIDENTS

How to Document **What You Observed**

When documenting suspected abuse or any incident, your notes must be **objective and factual**. No opinions. No diagnoses. Just what you saw and heard.

WRITE THIS

- "Three oval bruises on right upper arm, approx. 2 cm each, arranged in a linear grip pattern"
- "Patient stated: 'I don't remember how I got them'"
- "Family member present throughout visit"

NEVER WRITE THIS

- "Patient appears to be a victim of physical abuse"
- "I think the son is hurting him"
- "Abuse suspected — notified supervisor"

YOUR PROTECTION

Non-Retaliation Protection

Ohio law and NobleCare policy prohibit any retaliation against an employee for making a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect.

You cannot be fired for reporting.

You cannot be reassigned as punishment.

You cannot be harassed or pressured.

Good faith is the standard, not accuracy.

KEY CONTACTS

Who to Call

NOBLECARE SUPERVISOR

(740) 262-9845

hello@noblecareohio.com

First call for all incidents

OHIO ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

1-855-644-6277

County DJFS

Report within 24 hours

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH COMPLAINT LINE

1-800-342-0553

TIMELINES

Incident Reporting Timeline

- 01 **Immediately:** Ensure patient safety. Call 911 if life-threatening.
- 02 **Within 1 hour:** Notify your NobleCare supervisor by phone (not text).
- 03 **Before end of shift:** Complete the written incident report form.
- 04 **Within 24 hours:** File APS report for suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation.
- 05 **Within 48 hours:** Supervisor reviews report and determines additional notifications.

Never wait until "you're sure." Delayed reporting puts patients at continued risk and may violate the law.

AVOID THESE ERRORS

Common Reporting Mistakes

- **Waiting for proof** — reasonable suspicion is the standard, not certainty
- **Confronting the suspected abuser** — this can escalate danger for the patient
- **Only telling your supervisor** — APS reporting is your personal obligation too
- **Writing opinions in the documentation** — stick to facts only
- **Thinking "it's not my place"** — it is. The law requires it.
- **Discussing the situation with other patients or staff** — confidentiality applies

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Scenario

SITUATION

During a scheduled visit, Angela notices that her 77-year-old patient, Mr. P, has three new bruises on his upper arm — oval-shaped, in a **grip pattern**. When she asks, he hesitates, looks toward his adult son in the kitchen, and says quietly, *"I don't remember."* The son interrupts: *"He bruises easily. It's nothing."*

- A) Confront the son and demand an explanation
- B) Monitor the situation for a few more visits before deciding
- C) Complete the visit, document observations, call supervisor, and file APS report within 24 hours**
- D) Ask Mr. P directly if his son is hitting him

CORRECT ANSWER: C

Document, Report, Protect

WHY THE OTHERS ARE WRONG

- **A – Confronting the son** could escalate danger for Mr. P and compromise any investigation
- **B – Waiting** violates the 24-hour mandatory reporting requirement
- **D – Direct questioning** in front of the suspected abuser is unsafe and inappropriate

WHAT ANGELA DOCUMENTS

- "Three oval bruises on right upper arm, ~2 cm each, linear grip pattern"
- "Patient stated: 'I don't remember'"
- "Family member present throughout visit"
- No opinions — **facts only**

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Scenario

SITUATION

You overhear a fellow NobleCare caregiver **yelling at a patient**, calling them "stupid" and saying, "If you don't stop bothering me, I'll put you in a nursing home." The patient is visibly upset and crying.

- A) Talk to the caregiver privately and ask them to apologize
- B) Ignore it — everyone has bad days
- C) Report to your supervisor AND file an APS report — this is verbal/emotional abuse**
- D) Wait to see if it happens again before reporting

CORRECT ANSWER: C

Report Immediately — Even Against a Colleague

Verbal threats and emotional abuse are **reportable offenses** regardless of who commits them. The colleague's identity does not change your legal obligation.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- The colleague is **immediately removed** from patient contact pending investigation
- NobleCare conducts an internal investigation
- APS conducts an independent investigation
- **You are protected** from retaliation — the law and NobleCare policy guarantee it

Your job is to protect the patient. Full stop.

REVIEW

Knowledge Check

1. Under Ohio law, who is required to report suspected elder abuse?

Any person with reasonable suspicion — including all caregivers (ORC §5101.61)

2. You suspect financial exploitation. What do you do?

Report to your supervisor AND file an APS report within 24 hours

3. The suspected abuser is a NobleCare colleague. Does this change your reporting obligation?

No — report to supervisor and file APS report. The colleague will be removed from duty pending investigation.

4. When documenting suspected abuse, what should you write?

Objective, factual observations only — exact description of injuries, patient statements in quotes, who was present

5. What does non-retaliation protection mean?

You cannot be punished for reporting in good faith, even if the investigation finds no wrongdoing

Reporting Requirements

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You are a mandatory reporter under Ohio law
- Reasonable suspicion is enough — no proof needed
- Supervisor call + APS report within 24 hours
- Document facts only — never opinions
- Report even if the abuser is a colleague
- Non-retaliation protection — you are safe to report

Next → [Module 9: Code of Conduct & Compliance](#)