

CHAPTER 52  
DEPENDENT ADULT ABUSE IN FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

**481—52.1(235E) Definitions.** For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions apply:

*“Assault of a dependent adult”* means the commission of any act which is generally intended to cause pain or injury to a dependent adult, or which is generally intended to result in physical contact which would be considered by a reasonable person to be insulting or offensive or any act which is intended to place another in fear of immediate physical contact which will be painful, injurious, insulting, or offensive, coupled with the apparent ability to execute the act.

*“Caretaker”* means a person who is a staff member of a facility or program who provides care, protection, or services to a dependent adult voluntarily, by contract, through employment, or by order of the court. For the purpose of an allegation of exploitation, if the caretaker-dependent adult relationship started when a staff member was employed in the facility, the staff member may be considered a caretaker after employment is terminated.

*“Confidentiality”* means the withholding of information from any manner of communication, public or private.

*“Court”* means the district court.

*“Department”* means the department of inspections and appeals.

*“Dependent adult”* means a person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for the person’s own care or protection is impaired, either temporarily or permanently.

*“Dependent adult abuse”* means any of the following as a result of the willful misconduct or gross negligence or reckless act or omission of a caretaker, taking into account the totality of the circumstances: physical injury, unreasonable confinement, unreasonable punishment, assault, sexual offense, sexual exploitation, exploitation, neglect, or personal degradation. “Dependent adult abuse” does not include any of the following:

1. Circumstances in which the dependent adult declines medical treatment if the dependent adult holds a belief or is an adherent of a religion whose tenets and practices call for reliance on spiritual means in place of reliance on medical treatment.
2. Circumstances in which the dependent adult’s caretaker, acting in accordance with the dependent adult’s stated or implied consent, declines medical treatment or care.
3. The withholding or withdrawing of health care from a dependent adult who is terminally ill in the opinion of a licensed physician, when the withholding or withdrawing of health care is done at the request of the dependent adult or at the request of the dependent adult’s next of kin, attorney in fact, or guardian pursuant to the applicable procedures under Iowa Code chapter 125, 144A, 144B, 222, 229, or 633.

*“Exploitation”* means a caretaker who knowingly obtains, uses, endeavors to obtain to use, or who misappropriates, a dependent adult’s funds, assets, medications, or property with the intent to temporarily or permanently deprive a dependent adult of the use, benefit, or possession of the funds, assets, medication, or property for the benefit of someone other than the dependent adult.

*“Facility”* means a health care facility as defined in Iowa Code section 135C.1 or a hospital as defined in Iowa Code section 135B.1.

*“Gross negligence”* means an act or omission that signifies more than ordinary inadvertence or inattention, but less than conscious indifference to consequences; and, in other words, means an extreme departure from the ordinary standard of care.

*“Immediately,”* for purposes of mandatory reporters’ reporting of suspected dependent adult abuse, means within 24 hours.

*“Inspector”* means a surveyor, monitor or investigator with the department or any department designee.

*“Intimate relationship”* means a significant romantic involvement between two persons that need not include sexual involvement, but does not include a casual social relationship or association in a business

or professional capacity. In determining whether persons are in an intimate relationship, the following nonexclusive list of factors may be considered:

1. The duration of the relationship,
2. The frequency of interaction,
3. Whether the relationship has been terminated, and
4. The nature of the relationship, characterized by either person's expectation of sexual or romantic involvement.

*"Misappropriates"* means taking unfair advantage of or wrongfully or dishonestly exercising control over property.

*"Neglect of a dependent adult"* means the deprivation of the minimum food, shelter, clothing, supervision, physical or mental health care, or other care necessary to maintain a dependent adult's life or physical or mental health.

*"Person"* means person as defined in Iowa Code section 4.1.

*"Personal degradation"* means a willful act or statement by a caretaker intended to shame, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise harm the personal dignity of a dependent adult, or where the caretaker knew or reasonably should have known the act or statement would cause shame, degradation, humiliation, or harm to the personal dignity of a reasonable person. "Personal degradation" includes the taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image of a dependent adult by a caretaker, where the caretaker's actions constitute a willful act or statement intended to shame, degrade, humiliate, or otherwise harm the personal dignity of the dependent adult, or where the caretaker knew or reasonably should have known the act would cause shame, degradation, humiliation, or harm to the personal dignity of a reasonable person. "Personal degradation" does not include the taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image of a dependent adult for the purpose of reporting dependent adult abuse to law enforcement, the department, or other regulatory agency that oversees caretakers or enforces abuse or neglect provisions, or for the purpose of treatment or diagnosis or as part of an ongoing investigation. "Personal degradation" also does not include the taking, transmission, or display of an electronic image by a caretaker in accordance with the facility's or program's confidentiality policy and release of information or consent policies.

*"Physical injury"* means a physical injury, or injury which is at a variance with the history given of the injury, which involves a breach of skill or care or learning ordinarily exercised by a caretaker in similar circumstances. "Physical injury" includes damage to any bodily tissue to the extent that the tissue must undergo a healing process in order to be restored to a sound and healthy condition, damage to any bodily tissue to the extent that the tissue cannot be restored to a sound and healthy condition, or damage to any bodily tissue which results in the death of the person who has sustained the damage.

*"Program"* means an elder group home as defined in Iowa Code section 231B.1, an assisted living program certified under Iowa Code section 231C.3, or an adult day services program as defined in Iowa Code section 231D.1.

*"Recklessly"* means that a person acts or fails to act with respect to a material element of a public offense, when the person is aware of and consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that the material element exists or will result from the act or omission. The risk must be of such a nature and degree that disregard of the risk constitutes a gross deviation from the standard conduct that a reasonable person would observe in the situation.

*"Registry"* means the central registry for dependent adult abuse information established in Iowa Code section 235B.5.

*"Report"* means a verbal or written statement, made to the department, which alleges that dependent adult abuse has occurred.

*"Resident"* means a resident of a health care facility as defined in Iowa Code chapter 135C, a patient in a hospital as defined in Iowa Code chapter 135B, a tenant of an assisted living program as defined in Iowa Code chapter 231C, a tenant in an elder group home as defined in Iowa Code chapter 231B, or a participant in an adult day services program as defined in Iowa Code chapter 231D.

*"Sexual exploitation"* means any consensual or nonconsensual sexual conduct with a dependent adult by a caretaker whether within a facility or program or at a location outside of a facility or program. "Sexual exploitation" includes but is not limited to:

1. Kissing;
2. Touching of the clothed or unclothed breast, groin, buttock, anus, pubes, or genitals;
3. A sex act as defined in Iowa Code section 702.17;
4. The transmission, display or taking of electronic images of the unclothed breast, groin, buttock, anus, pubes, or genitals of a dependent adult by a caretaker for a purpose not related to treatment, care, monitoring, assessment or diagnosis or as part of an ongoing investigation.

“Sexual exploitation” does not include touching which is part of a necessary examination, treatment, or care by a caretaker acting within the scope of the practice or employment of the caretaker; the exchange of a brief touch or hug between the dependent adult and a caretaker for the purpose of reassurance, comfort, or casual friendship; or touching between spouses or domestic partners in an intimate relationship.

“*Sexual offense*” means the commission of a sexual offense under Iowa Code chapter 709 or Iowa Code section 726.2 with or against a dependent adult.

“*Staff member*” means an individual who provides direct or indirect treatment or services to residents in a facility or program. Direct treatment or services include those provided through person-to-person contact. Indirect treatment or services include those provided without person-to-person contact such as those provided by administration, dietary, laundry, and maintenance. Specifically excluded from the definition of “staff member” are individuals such as part-time volunteers, building contractors, repair workers or others who are in a facility or program for a very limited purpose, are not in the facility or program on a regular basis, or do not provide any treatment or services to the residents of the facility or program.

“*Unreasonable confinement*” means confinement that includes but is not limited to the use of restraints, either physical or chemical, for the convenience of staff. “Unreasonable confinement” does not include the use of confinement and restraints if the methods are employed in conformance with state and federal standards governing confinement and restraint or as authorized by a physician or physician extender.

“*Unreasonable punishment*” means a willful act or statement intended by the caretaker to punish, agitate, confuse, frighten, or cause emotional distress to the dependent adult. Such willful act or statement includes but is not limited to intimidating behavior, threats, harassment, deceptive acts, or false or misleading statements.

“*Willful misconduct*” means an intentional act of unreasonable character committed with disregard for a known or obvious risk that is so great as to make it highly probable that harm will follow.  
[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10; ARC 3235C, IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17]

#### **481—52.2(235E) Persons who must report dependent adult abuse and the reporting procedure for those persons.**

**52.2(1)** Persons who must report dependent adult abuse. The following persons shall report suspected dependent adult abuse in accordance with subrule 52.2(2) below.

*a.* A staff member. Specifically excluded from the definition of “staff member” only for purposes of the requirements set forth in this subrule are individuals who have no contact or de minimis contact with residents in a facility or program.

*b.* An employee of a facility or program who, in the course of employment, examines, attends, counsels, or treats a dependent adult in a facility or program and reasonably believes the dependent adult has suffered dependent adult abuse.

**52.2(2)** Reporting suspected dependent adult abuse in facilities or programs.

*a.* If a staff member or employee is required to make a report pursuant to this rule, the staff member or employee shall immediately notify the person in charge or the person’s designated agent who shall then notify the department within 24 hours of such notification or the next business day.

*b.* If the person in charge is the alleged dependent adult abuser, the staff member shall directly report the abuse to the department within 24 hours or the next business day.

*c.* Nothing in this subrule prevents a mandatory reporter or any other person from notifying the department directly of any suspected abuse.

d. The employer or supervisor of a person who is required to or may make a report pursuant to this rule shall not apply a policy, work rule, or other requirement that interferes with the person making a report of dependent adult abuse or that results in the failure of another person to make the report.

e. When the person making the report has reason to believe that immediate protection for the dependent adult is advisable, that person should also immediately make an oral report to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

f. A report of suspected dependent adult abuse shall contain as much of the following information as the person making the report is able to furnish:

- (1) The date and time of the incident;
- (2) The name, date of birth and diagnoses of the dependent adult;
- (3) Whether the dependent adult sustained an injury and, if yes, whether photographs of the injury were taken;
- (4) The nature and extent of the dependent adult abuse, including evidence of previous dependent adult abuse allegations;
- (5) A list of the staff members working at the time of the incident, including each staff member's full name, title, date of birth, address and telephone number;
- (6) The alleged perpetrator's full name, title, date of birth, social security number, address and telephone number;
- (7) Other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the abuse or the identity of the person or persons responsible for the abuse or helpful in providing assistance to the dependent adult; and
- (8) The name, address and telephone number of the person making the report.

**52.2(3)** A report shall be accepted whether or not it contains all of the information requested. When the report is made to any agency other than the department, that agency shall promptly refer the report to the department.

**52.2(4)** A person required to report abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so within 24 hours may be subject to criminal penalties and civil liability as provided for by statute.

**52.2(5)** Interference with a person required to report.

a. It is unlawful for any person or employer to discharge, suspend, or otherwise discipline a person for any of the following:

- (1) For reporting suspected dependent adult abuse;
- (2) For cooperating with or assisting the department in evaluating or investigating a case of dependent adult abuse; or
- (3) For participating in judicial proceedings relating to dependent adult abuse.

b. A person or employer found in violation of this subrule is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

**52.2(6)** Staff members who are employed by a facility or program on January 1, 2010, and who were not previously required to attend dependent adult abuse training shall be required to have attended the training no later than December 31, 2010.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

#### **481—52.3(235E) Reports and registry of dependent adult abuse.**

**52.3(1)** *Receipt and evaluation of reports.* The department shall receive and evaluate reports of dependent adult abuse in facilities and programs. The department shall inform the department of human services of such evaluations and dispositions for inclusion in the central registry for dependent adult abuse information pursuant to Iowa Code section 235B.5.

**52.3(2)** *Reports sent to the department or the department of human services.* Any person who believes that a dependent adult has suffered dependent adult abuse may report the suspected dependent adult abuse to the department. The department shall transfer any reports received of dependent adult abuse in the community to the department of human services. The department of human services shall transfer any reports received of dependent adult abuse in facilities or programs to the department.

**52.3(3)** *Reports of abuse that is minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur.*

*a. Minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur—first instance.* A report of dependent adult abuse that meets the definition of “dependent adult abuse” as defined in Iowa Code section 235E.1(5) “a”(1)(a) or (d) which the department determines is minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur shall be collected and maintained by the department of human services for a five-year period, shall not be included in the central registry, and shall not be considered founded dependent adult abuse.

*b. Minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur—subsequent instance(s).* A subsequent report of dependent adult abuse that meets the definition of “dependent adult abuse” as defined in Iowa Code section 235E.1(5) “a”(1)(a) or (d), that occurs within the five-year period, and that is committed by the same caretaker may also be considered minor, isolated, and unlikely to reoccur, depending on the totality of circumstances.

*c. Retention of reports.* All initial and subsequent reports are collected and maintained by the department of human services until a five-year period has expired, so long as no additional reports have been filed.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

**481—52.4(235E) Financial institution employees and reporting suspected financial exploitation.** An employee of a financial institution may report suspected financial exploitation of a dependent adult to the department.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

**481—52.5(235E) Evaluation of report.** Upon receipt of a report as defined in rule 481—52.1(235E), the department shall conduct an intake sufficient to determine whether the allegation constitutes dependent adult abuse as defined in rule 481—52.1(235E).

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

**481—52.6(235E) Separation of victim and alleged abuser.** Upon receiving a claim of dependent adult abuse of a dependent adult in a facility or program, the facility or program shall separate the victim and the alleged abuser immediately and shall maintain that separation until the department’s abuse investigation is completed and the abuse determination is made.

NOTE: Facilities that participate in the federal Medicare or Medicaid program may be subject to additional federal requirements regarding separation.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

**481—52.7(235E) Interviews, examination of evidence, and investigation of dependent adult abuse allegations.**

**52.7(1) Entering and examining evidence at a facility or program.** An inspector of the department may enter any facility or program without a warrant and may examine all records and items pertaining to residents, employees, former employees, and the alleged dependent adult abuser and any other records and items necessary to ensure the integrity of the investigation unless the record or item is protected by some other legal privilege.

**52.7(2) Interviews.**

*a.* An inspector of the department may contact or interview any resident, employee, former employee, or any other person who might have knowledge about the alleged dependent adult abuse.

*b.* An alleged dependent adult abuser may request to have an attorney present at the alleged dependent adult abuser’s expense at any time during the interview, but the request may not unreasonably delay the investigation. An employee organization representative or union representative may observe an investigative interview conducted by the department of an alleged dependent adult abuser if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The alleged dependent adult abuser is part of a bargaining unit or employee organization that is party to a collective bargaining agreement under Iowa Code chapter 20 or any other applicable state or federal law.

(2) The alleged dependent adult abuser requests the presence of a union representative or employee organization representative.

(3) The representative maintains the confidentiality of all information from the interview subject to the penalties provided in Iowa Code section 235B.12 if such confidentiality is breached.

(4) The purpose of the interview is a civil administrative dependent adult abuse investigation under applicable law.

**52.7(3) *Photographs of victim, vicinity and related matters.*** An inspector may take or cause to be taken photographs of the dependent adult abuse victim and the vicinity involved. The department shall obtain consent from the dependent adult abuse victim or guardian or other person with a power of attorney over the dependent adult abuse victim prior to taking photographs of the dependent adult abuse victim.

**52.7(4) *Evaluating information.*** An inspector shall consider the information as reported, other known or discovered information, and any information gathered as a result of the inspector's contact with collateral sources, including prior abuse allegations and disciplinary actions.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

**481—52.8(235E) Notification to subsequent employers.** The department shall notify a facility or program that subsequently employs an alleged or founded dependent adult abuser.

[ARC 8294B, IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 235E.

[Filed ARC 8294B (Notice ARC 7828B, IAB 6/3/09; Amended Notice ARC 7939B, IAB 7/1/09), IAB 11/18/09, effective 1/1/10]

[Filed ARC 3235C (Notice ARC 3110C, IAB 6/7/17), IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17]