

Guide for service providers:

understanding and responding to self-neglect

What is self-neglect

Self-neglect is when a person does not care for their own basic needs and it can seriously impact their health, safety, wellbeing and dignity.

Who may be at increased risk

- Older people
- People living with disability
- People who rely on others for care or support or are unable to access care/support
- People experiencing isolation, mental health issues, or cognitive decline
- People who experience chronic health conditions or addiction

What self-neglect might look like

- Not eating, showering, or managing personal hygiene
- Refusing medical care
- Declining support services
- Living in unsafe or unhygienic conditions

How to identify signs of self-neglect


Look out for:

- Unexplained weight loss, dehydration and malnutrition
- Unkept personal appearance, including body odour, unwashed clothing
- Untreated injuries or medical conditions (such as, poorly managed diabetes)
- Home environment that is unsafe, unhygienic or severely cluttered
- Withdrawn from community
- Not accessing medical or dental care (including missed appointments)
- Difficulty managing daily responsibilities (utilities disconnected, no access to phone, no food in the fridge)

What to do if you suspect self-neglect

If you are concerned about a person's immediate health or safety, please call:

 **000** (emergency services) or


 **131 465**
(SA Mental Health Triage)

For non-urgent police assistance, for example, requesting a welfare check, please call:

 **131 444**

Approach the person with sensitivity and respect:

- Engage in a non-judgemental and compassionate manner
- Explain your observations clearly and respectfully
- Take time to understand their perspective, preferences, and care needs
- Involve a trusted family member or friend, if appropriate and with the person's consent



Where appropriate, and with consideration of privacy:

- Notify the person's GP
- Inform their primary community care provider
- Contact their NDIS Support Coordinator (if applicable)
- Contact My Aged Care providers (if applicable)
- Continue to monitor concerns and document observations
- Provide the person with information and support relevant to their situation

If you are concerned about a person's decision-making capacity:

- Discuss your concerns with their GP or primary care provider
- Confirm whether they have an Advance Care Directive or a SACAT appointed guardian
- If decision-making concerns persist, you may need to apply to SACAT for a Guardianship Order. Consider contacting Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) for information regarding seeking a guardianship order to SACAT

For older people living in the community, consider contacting the Community Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM) Service:

- Refer to the Contacts for Safeguarding Assistance Information Sheet for more information about who to contact.

If you are an NDIS provider or aged care worker:

- Report internally according to your organisation's safeguarding or incident management policy.

Consider whether to make a report to:

- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (if person is an NDIS participant).
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (if person is in aged care).

If you are unsure the Adult Safeguarding Unit can provide free, confidential information, advice and support.

A copy of the **Contacts for Safeguarding Assistance Information Sheet** is available for agencies.

Remember: safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Your actions can protect a person from ongoing harm and help restore their dignity, rights, and safety.

For more information

**Office for Ageing Well
Adult Safeguarding Unit**



**PO Box 196, Rundle Mall
Adelaide SA 5000**



**1800 372 310
(weekdays 9:00am to 4:00pm)**



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