



Zero Tolerance Policy for Child Abuse or Neglect

First 5 Humboldt subscribes to a “zero tolerance” policy toward any form of child abuse or neglect. First 5 Humboldt believes that the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals served is of the highest priority, and expects that all services and supports provided to families will be offered at all times in a considerate, respectful, and careful manner, with an accompanying focus on the individual’s security and dignity.

DEFINITIONS:

Physical Abuse: Abuse includes neglect, physical abuse or attempt to use force on the person of another; unreasonable physical constraint; prolonged or continual deprivation of food or water; or sexual abuse. It also means the use of isolation, physical or chemical restraint, or psychotropic medication without medical authorization as a form of punishment.

Mental Suffering: Defined as fear, agitation, confusion, severe depression or other forms of emotional distress that are brought about by threats, harassment or other forms of intimidating behavior.

Financial Abuse: According to California law, financial abuse is “a situation in which a person, including, but not limited to, one who has care or custody of or who stands in a position of trust, of an elder or dependent adult, takes, secretes, or appropriates their money or property, to any wrongful use, or with the intent to defraud.” Financial abuse also includes the illegal or improper use of an elder or dependent adult’s financial resources.

Neglect: Defined as the negligent failure of a person(s) having care or custody of a client to exercise a reasonable degree of care including, but not limited to, a failure to assist in personal hygiene, and the provision of food, clothing, and shelter, or failure to provide medical care or protect the client from health and safety hazards.

POLICY: Client abuse committed by, or in the presence of, First 5 Humboldt employees or employees of service providers or long term care facilities will not be tolerated. All such abuse or allegations of such abuse will be referred to, and investigated by, the appropriate authorities. Any First 5 Humboldt employee found to have engaged in abuse against a client will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Any abuse alleged or found to have been committed by a contractor or grantee of First 5 Humboldt will be referred to the appropriate authorities and if substantiated, may result in the termination of First 5 Humboldt's contract or grant agreement.

Acknowledgement given to Redwood Coast Regional Center for portions of this policy statement.

All First 5 Humboldt employees who are mandated reporters, and all employees of contractors and grantees of First 5 Humboldt who are mandated reporters shall strictly comply with reporting laws at all times. A mandated reporter must report all client abuse to the applicable governmental authorities immediately or as soon as possible after client abuse has been alleged or his/her discovery or reasonable belief that client abuse has occurred.

First 5 Humboldt and our contractors and grantees shall ensure their employees are fully informed upon hire and annually thereafter regarding First 5 Humboldt's Zero Tolerance Policy on Client Abuse or Neglect and the mandatory abuse and neglect reporting laws. Each employee must be knowledgeable of their responsibility to protect clients from abuse and neglect, the signs of abuse and neglect, the process for reporting suspected abuse or neglect, and the consequences of failing to follow the law and enforce this policy.

If First 5 Humboldt or a First 5 Humboldt contractor or grantee becomes aware of client abuse, it shall take immediate action, to the extent permitted by law, to ensure the health and safety of the affected client(s) and all other clients receiving services and supports from First 5 Humboldt. This obligation is in addition to those obligations required of mandated reporters to report client abuse or neglect under the reporting laws.

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