Power & Control Wheel: People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers

Coercion and Threats:
- Threatening to hurt the person; withhold basic support and rights; terminate relationship and leave the person unattended; report noncompliance with the program; use more intrusive equipment. Using consequences and punishments to gain compliant behavior. Pressuring the person to engage in fraud or other crimes.

Intimidation:
- Raising a hand or using looks, actions, or gestures to create fear. Destroying property and abusing pets. Mistreating service animals. Displaying weapons.

Emotional Abuse:
- Punishing or ridiculing. Refusing to speak and ignoring requests. Ridiculing the person’s culture, traditions, religion, and personal tastes. Enforcing a negative reinforcement program or any behavior program the person doesn’t consent to.

Economic Abuse:
- Using person’s property and money for staff’s benefit. Stealing. Using property and/or money as a reward or punishment in a behavior program. Making financial decisions based on agency or family needs. Limiting access to financial information and resources resulting in unnecessary impoverishment.

Isolation:
- Controlling access to friends, family, and neighbors. Controlling access to phone, TV, news. Limiting employment possibilities because of caregiver schedule. Discouraging contact with the case manager or advocate.

Caregiver Privilege:
- Treating person as a child, servant. Making unilateral decisions. Defining narrow, limiting roles and responsibilities. Providing care in a way that accentuates the person’s dependence and vulnerability. Giving an opinion as if it were the person’s opinion. Denying the right to privacy. Ignoring, discouraging, or prohibiting the exercise of full capabilities.

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Minimize, Justify, and Blame:
- Denying or making light of abuse. Denying the physical and emotional pain of people with disabilities. Justifying rules that limit autonomy, dignity, and relationships for program’s operational efficiency. Excusing abuse as behavior management or as due to caregiver stress. Blaming the disability for abuse. Saying the person is not a “good reporter” of abuse.

Withhold, Misuse, or Delay Needed Supports:
- Using medication to sedate the person for agency convenience. Ignoring equipment safety requirements. Breaking or not fixing adaptive equipment. Refusing to use or destroying communication devices. Withdrawing care or equipment to immobilize the person. Using equipment to torture people.

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