



**2019 Annual Conference**  
**American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry**  
**Presentations by Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D.**

**Methods for Improving Abuse Recognition and Provider Management**

The objective is to increase physician awareness and response to signs of abuse that may be the cause of changes in the child/adult as reported by the parent/caregiver. The “Rule Out Abuse Physician Education Campaign” provides detailed information on abuse and signs of abuse as they emerge in children with I/DD, which may differ from the conventional “signs of abuse” identified for those children and adults without disabilities. The outcome is increased recognition of the obvious and subtle signs of abuse, responding by filing a suspected child abuse report, and documenting in the medical record the signs and symptoms that are identified. In addition to making the mandatory suspected abuse report, it is hoped that more appropriate medical recommendations be made for trauma-directed treatment, including appropriate medication, therapy, counseling or other trauma-reduction related recommendations and interventions. Co-Presenter Dr. Susan Abend presents the “Right Care Now” program that modifies the EMR to collect patient information that alerts the physician to a pattern suggesting abuse, using algorithms typical of maltreatment. This is a promising practice that will facilitate physician recognition of signs of abuse and track the patient’s progress.

**An Approach to Reduce the Risk and Impact of Abuse Among Individuals with I/DD**

The goals of reducing the incidence and impact of abuse can be met by developing Individual Response Plans for each person with a disability and their primary and secondary caregivers. Success has been reported in evading attempts to lure the individual into an isolated area and surviving assaults due to having knowledge, skills and understanding of what one can do during and after these events. Both the individual with a disability and their parent or caregiver, identified in this program as a “plan partner,” have reported feeling empowerment and reduced traumatic impact following a succeeding assault or attempted assault. It is recommended that at least annually, Individualized Response Plans are revised in light of the person’s increase/decrease in skills, understanding, and well-being. The excitement of survivors as to their empowerment in these situations has been remarkable and gratifying. This approach could be universally implemented. There is no cost except for the time and effort to design Individual Response Plans.