

Vulnerable Populations: Children

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“I have neither given nor receive, nor will I tolerate others’ use of unauthorized aid”.

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When it comes to vulnerability, few are more vulnerable than the children in our world today. It seems as if almost every day we hear stories about an adult who wrongs a child. Whether it is physical or mentally harming them, child abuse is rampant in our world today. Most of these children do not have the ability to speak about the wrongs done to them, but instead, must live their lives as if it never happened. Children are the most vulnerable among us, and they need to be protected.

Children have needs that most adults do not have. Most of their needs revolve around someone providing them with something. For example, newborn babies and toddlers must be provided with food or else they starve while most adults can walk to the kitchen and get something themselves. Additionally, adults have a voice. Most adults can speak about any wrongs that have been done to them, but children do not have that ability. If their parent, guardian, or anyone else, is perpetrating evil against them, they cannot say or do anything to stop it. Overall, children have many needs that the adult population does not have, and if those needs are not met by an adult, no one will meet them.

Right now, I work in an emergency department as an Emergency Department Technician. Since doing that, I have had a lot of exposure to my own biases. While they may not be against children, they are still there. The biggest one I have noticed is against those with an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Often, these patients can be belligerent and even violent which is mentally and physically taxing on healthcare workers. Although I know that these addicts generally want better for themselves, it is hard for me to not be biased against them when I have seen many addicts act violently.

Cultural competence is defined as “a developmental process that builds continuous increases in knowledge and skill development in the areas of cultural awareness, knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, interaction and skills” (Hood, 2018). Nursing is unique in that you grow much closer to your clients than most other fields. Because of this, nurses need to be extremely culturally competent. In healthcare, people often come to us when they are at their worst and they put a lot of trust in us to make them better. That is why nurses need to ensure that they are culturally competent because otherwise, they will very quickly lose a patient’s trust.

Homeless people, in a different sense than children, often lack a voice or platform to speak up for themselves. As a current healthcare worker, I very strongly hold the belief that people should not be turned away from healthcare due to lacking the ability to pay or being homeless. “People experiencing homelessness, particularly chronic homelessness, often lack reasonable alternatives to living in public” (Rankin, 2019). It is because of this, that homeless or impoverished people should still receive quality health care from us. People who are not given the platform or cannot advocate for themselves deserve people who will advocate for them, and I think that nurses, who already advocate for their patients, are a good start for that.

Vulnerability comes in all shapes and sizes. Whether its homelessness, the impoverished, or children, vulnerability is all around us. It is something that most people ignore, however, that needs to change. We need to give a voice to the vulnerable so that they can speak and advocate for themselves.

References

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