



ELDER ABUSE HURTS

In More Ways Than One

Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center



It is estimated that each year one of every 20 older Americans is a victim of abuse.

Many elderly people are afraid to report incidents of mistreatment or neglect because those inflicting the abuse may be family members, caretakers or significant others.

Elder abuse takes many forms, some of them subtle. What people don't know about elder abuse – including steps they can take to deal with it – can really hurt, in more ways than one.

A clearer understanding of elder abuse is a first step toward prevention and intervention.

There are many forms of elder abuse.

It is important to recognize that elder abuse differs from other crimes against the elderly. Elder abuse escalates over time, it moves from one level to another and it can be a combination of abuses. It also involves a trusting relationship between the abuser and the abused. Abusers can be adult children, spouses, relatives, friends, neighbors, hired caregivers or persons with fiduciary or legal responsibility for the elder.

Types of abuse include:

Physical abuse. The infliction of physical pain or injury, or physical coercion. Examples include: slapping, bruising, sexually molesting, cutting, burning, pushing, and physically restraining or confining against the older person's will.

Escalating violence or intimidation by an intimate partner – domestic violence – is elder abuse.

Psychological/emotional abuse. The infliction of mental pain, anguish or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts. Examples include name calling, ignoring, treating as a child, insulting, threatening or isolating behaviors.

Financial exploitation. Stealing, misusing or concealing the money, property, credit cards or assets of an older person.

Neglect. The refusal or failure to fulfill a caregiving obligation, including abandonment, non-provision of food, health care, medications or aids (glasses, walker, dentures, etc.)

Any older person can be a victim of abuse.

- Oldest elders are two to three times more likely to be abused.
- Almost half have limitations/illnesses that make them physically unable to care for themselves.
- All racial, ethnic and religious groups.
- All incomes.
- Educated and uneducated.

Elder abuse warning signs.

Clues to the possible presence of elder abuse can be detected in certain physical changes and behavior.

Signs in the Elderly

- Inadequately explained bruises, cuts, burns or broken bones.
- Unusual confinement (closed off in a room; tied to furniture).
- Fear, anxiety, depression, withdrawal, shame, embarrassment, paranoia.
- Dehydrated or malnourished appearance.
- Lack of cleanliness, grooming.
- Bed sores, soiled bedding, unmet medical needs.
- Unexplained inability to pay bills.
- Large withdrawals from bank accounts, closing or switching accounts, unusual ATM activity, sudden transfer of assets or unexplained loss of social security or pension checks.
- Signature on checks doesn't match elder's signature.

Signs in the Abuser

- Threatening remarks or behavior.
- Insults, aggressive behavior.
- Attitude of indifference, impatience, irritability or anger toward the older person.
- Explanations of older person's injuries that don't make sense.
- Problem with alcohol or drugs.
- Previous history of abusive behavior.

Certain situations place older adults at higher risk of elder abuse. Examples include:

- The abuser is dependent on the older person for emotional support and/or financial assistance such as money, housing, or food.
- Caregiver resents being responsible for older person's well being or wants to retaliate against

- the older relative for past mistreatment.
- Caregiver stressed by mental illness, alcohol and/or drug addiction, chronic gambling, job loss, divorce or financial problems.
- Older person needs more care than caregiver is able to provide and/or caregiver lacks knowledge and resources to meet older person's needs.
- Crowded living quarters create stress, particularly when change in living situation is recent (older person moved in with caregiver or vice versa).
- Family has a pattern of violent interactions and/or domestic violence.
- Older isolated or bereaved person is vulnerable to predatory individuals who claim to "love" them.
- Family members who are due to inherit money or property, or who fear the costs of care will deprive them of their inheritance, feel justified in taking what they believe is theirs.

There are many ways to challenge elder abuse.

No one should be reluctant to report evidence of elder abuse, no matter who is doing it.

Call 911 immediately if you think someone is in life-threatening danger.

Don't put the older person in a more vulnerable position by confronting the abuser yourself.

If danger is not immediate, but you suspect that abuse has occurred or is occurring, call 311 and ask to be connected to the Department for the Aging's Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center.

Your concerns and questions will be discussed in complete confidentiality when you call DFTA's Elderly Crime Victims Resource Center.

Services available through the Center assist older victims of abuse to live with safety and dignity and to maintain power and control over their lives. The center can also link you with the following community resources:

- Case management services.
- Protective services.
- Supportive counseling services.
- Victims' services network.
- Police Services.
- District Attorney's office.
- Legal services specializing in the elderly.
- Referral for emergency shelter, court protective order, hospital admission, emergency financial assistance, and security device installation.
- Caregiver services.

Resources and more information

**Department of Health & Human Services
National Center on Elder Abuse, Administration
on Aging - www.ncea.aoa.gov**

NURSING HOME COMPLAINTS
1-800-342-3009 (Toll free in New York) - Press
Option 6

To file a complaint, including abuse, regarding
Certified Adult Care Facilities, call toll-free
1-866-893-6772.

For information on all City services



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Mayor
City of New York**

**Lilliam Barrios -Paoli
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New York City
Department for the Aging**

www.nyc.gov/aging

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