



CARING FOR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS A Ministry for Older Adults Of the KY Conference

Signs of Elder Abuse

Abuse of the elderly come in many forms, unfortunately, and refers to actions that are knowingly, intentionally, or acts of negligence to an older adult to cause harm or put them in a risk of harm. **Be alert to those suffering in silence!**

Who are at risk for elder abuse?

Older people who are most at risk of abuse at home:

- Have little contact with friends, family or neighbors – they're isolated and alone
- Have memory problems
- Have communication difficulty
- Have a caregiver who is addicted to drugs or alcohol
- Have a caregiver who depends on them for a home and money (often a relative)

State legislators act aggressively to any form of elder abuse. The laws and definitions of elder abuse are broad and very considerably from one state to another. Generally, they all say something like the following:

Physical abuse (inflicting physical pain or injury) is not always easy to spot, but the signs are: slapping, bruising, or restraining by physical or chemical means. Older adults make excuses for the bruising. But rather than make excuses, they often isolate from or not talk to people. if you spot it, bring it up, otherwise, physical abuse continues.

What are the behavioral signs of an elderly abused person?

- Quiet and withdrawn
- Aggressive or angry for no reason
- Dirty or thinner than usual
- Shows changes in normal character, more depressed, saddened, or powerless
- Has bruising, wounds, fractures and recurring injuries
- Uncomfortable being left alone or with particular people
- Puts on a lighthearted attitude, swearing there's nothing wrong

Sexual abuse (non-consensual sexual contact) involved physical sexual acts, showing pornographic material demanding she watch sex acts or forces her to undress.

Negligence (neglect or abandonment) failure to provide food, shelter, health care, or protection for a vulnerable elder by those responsible. Caregiving obligation constitutes more than half of all reported cases of elder abuse (intentional or unintentional, based on ignorance or denial).

Exploitation (financial) is unauthorized use of funds or property, by a caregiver, family member, neighbor, friend, or unknown scam artist. It involves illegal tasking, concealment of funds, property, steal cash, income checks, household goods, forged signature, phony charity, or identity theft.

Emotional abuse (inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress) by belittling, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening. Look for displays of behavior by the elder to mimic, rocking, sucking, or mumbling.

Abandonment-desertion of a vulnerable elder by the person who is responsible for care or custody.

Self-neglect-failure to perform self-care tasks that threaten health or safety.

Indicators of Elder Abuse

- Broken bones, cuts, bruises, pressure marks, burns-points to possible physical abuse, neglect, or mistreatment.
- Unexplained withdrawal, sudden change in alertness, unusual depression – points to possible emotional abuse.
- Bruises around the breasts or genital area – points to sexual abuse.
- Changes in finances – points to possible exploitation.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, weight loss – points to possible neglect.
- Belittling, threats, spousal power and control – points to possible verbal and emotional abuse
- Learn more about elder abuse on the following website:
http://www.aoa.gov/Elder_rights/EA_Prevention/whatisEA.aspx#warning/

Who are the abusers?

- Women and men: family members, friends, or trusted providers
- Happens in hospitals, residential care, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes. When a facility is not managed well or the staff lacks training and supervision, it contributes to elder abuse.

Who Responds to Elder Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation?

- If someone is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police for immediate help.
- Adult Protective Services – public agency responsible for investigating reported cases of elder and vulnerable adult abuse and for providing victims with treatment and protective services. Adult Protective Services, Area Agency on Aging, or County Department of Social Services receives and investigates allegations.
- Law enforcement – local police, sheriffs, and prosecuting attorneys investigate and prosecute abuse.
- Long Term Care Ombudsman – at state level, investigates and resolves nursing home complaints, and in some areas, complaints about board and care facilities and professional home care providers. Check the state Long Term Care Ombudsman Website ([http://theconsumervoice.org/get help](http://theconsumervoice.org/get_help)) in your area for help.
- Eldercare Locator – Eldercare Locator website, or call 1-800-677-1116, to find resources for older adults in any U.S. Community.
- The State Resources section of the National Center on Elder Abuse website – <https://ncea.acl.gov/>