

## **ELDER ABUSE**

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) estimates that 1 in 10 older people suffer from some type of abuse every year. Yet the signs of elder abuse often go unreported, and abusers go unpunished.

Abuse can happen to any older person by a loved one, hired care giver, or a stranger

### **Notable elder abuse risk factors include:**

- **Gender:** According to the National Institute on Aging (NIA), women are more likely to suffer from elder abuse than men.
- **Health:** The NIA found that older adults with mental or physical health problems that need daily care from another person are at a greater risk of elder abuse. At particular risk are elders with severe handicaps like dementia.
- **Lack of support:** Older people who do not have close friends or family members near them may be at a greater risk of abuse, as less people will be able to check up on them.

Additionally, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) found that instances of elder abuse **by family members accounted for 60%** of all cases. A spouse or a grown child were the most common family members to commit elder abuse.

### What Are the Warning Signs of Elder Abuse?

The most common warning signs of elder abuse are strange and sudden changes to an elderly loved one's mental, physical, or financial well-being. Specific signs of elder abuse vary depending on what type of elder abuse is affecting the victim.

### **Financial:**

- Sudden changes in bank accounts or banking practices, including an unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money by a person accompanying the older adult
- The inclusion of additional names on an older adult's bank signature card
- Unauthorized withdrawal of the older adult's funds using their ATM card
- Abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents
- Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions
- Provision of substandard care or bills left unpaid despite the availability of adequate financial resources
- Discovery of a forged signature for financial transactions or for the titles of the older adult's possessions
- Sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives claiming their rights to an older adult's property or possessions
- Unexplained sudden transfer of assets to a family member or someone outside the family
- The older adults self report of financial exploitation.

## **Neglect / Abandonment:**

- Dehydration, malnutrition, untreated bed sores, and poor personal hygiene
- Unattended or untreated health problems
- Hazardous or unsafe living conditions/arrangements (e.g., improper wiring, no heat, or no running water)
- Unsanitary and unclean living condition (e.g., dirt, fleas, lice on person, soiled bedding, fecal/urine smell, inadequate clothing)
- The desertion of an older adult at a hospital, nursing facility, or other similar institution, or a shopping center or other public location
- An older adult's self report of being neglected or abandoned

## **Emotional:**

- Being emotionally upset or agitated
- Being extremely withdrawn, non communicative or non responsive
- Unusual behavior, such as sucking, biting, rocking
- Witnessing a caregiver controlling or isolating an older adult
- Exhibiting a change in sleeping patterns or eating habits
- Personality changes, such as apologizing excessively
- Depression or anxiety
- An older adult's self report of being verbally or emotionally mistreated

## **Physical:**

- Bruises, black eyes, welts, lacerations, or rope marks
- Bone fractures, broken bones, or skull fractures
- Open wounds, cuts punctures, untreated injuries in various stages of healing
- Sprains, dislocations, or internal injuries/bleeding
- Broken eyeglasses/frames, physical signs of being subjected to punishment, or signs of being restrained
- Laboratory findings of medication overdose, or under utilization of prescribed drugs
- An older adult's sudden change in behavior

- An older adults report of being slapped, hit, kicked or mistreated

### **Sexual** :

- Bruises around the breasts or genital area
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Changes in an older adult's demeanor, such as showing fear or becoming withdrawn with a specific person is around
- Evidence of pornographic material being shown to an older adult with diminished capacity
- Blood found on sheets, linens or an older adult's clothing
- An older adult's self report of being sexually assaulted or raped

### **Who Should I Tell?**

- If the abuse is happening now, call 911.
- If you suspect elder or adult abuse, call Adult Protective Services at **888-277-8366**.
- If the abuse is physical, call Tennessee Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-356-6767**.

TENNESSEE IS A MANDATORY REPORTING STATE. If you see abuse ----- or even SUSPECT that an adult is being abused, neglected or exploited – you MUST report it. Call the Tennessee Department of Human Services Adult Protective Services unit, toll-free at 888-277-8366

Information from the Department of Justice AND The National Institute on Aging