



Elder Abuse: Hidden Crimes, Hidden Victims



Why Learn About Elder Abuse?

- Because you:
 - Could be the victim's first or only chance for help
 - May be the only other person in the victim's life
 - Will be better prepared to help older victims

Knowing the warning signs...may save a life



What Do We Know?

- Population is aging
- Reported cases of abuse are increasing annually
- Physical and financial recovery more difficult
- Elder abuse victims die earlier
- Low utilization of services by older victims



A Glimpse of Ohio

- 2008 - 17% of state's population is 60 or older
(estimated 2 million)
- 2009 – 16,370 reports of elder abuse were received
in the community
- 2020 - 40% population growth projected
(estimated 3 million)



What is Elder Abuse?

- Elder Abuse:
 - Any knowing, intentional, or negligent act
 - By a caregiver or other in a position of trust
 - That causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable older person



What is Elder Abuse? (cont.)

- Abuse
 - Emotional, Physical, Psychological, Sexual
- Neglect
 - Abandonment, Caregiver, Self
- Exploitation
 - Financial

Any of the above may co-occur with each other



Who Are the Victims?

- Persons 60 years of age and older
- All racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds
- Men and women
 - Women more likely to be reported



Who are the Abusers?

- Spouses or intimate partners
- Adult children
- Relatives
- Caregivers
- Friends
- Others in positions of authority



Where Does Elder Abuse Occur?

- Private residences
- Public settings
- Facility settings

Why Does Elder Abuse Occur & Persist?

- Greed
- Power and control

The seal of the Ohio Attorney General is a circular emblem. It features a central landscape with a sun rising over mountains, a body of water, and a field of crops. The words "THE SEAL OF THE OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL" are inscribed around the perimeter. A banner at the bottom contains the motto "ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE" and a five-pointed star is positioned below the banner.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Abuse

The infliction upon an adult by him/herself or others of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation or cruel punishment with resulting physical harm, pain or mental anguish.

Emotional, Physical, Psychological, Sexual, Verbal



Abuse Indicators

- Adult expresses fear or reports abuse
- Injuries inconsistent with explanation
- Injuries not in areas normally associated with accidents
- Restrained, tied or locked in



Abuse Indicators (cont.)

- Bruises, welts, lacerations, rope marks
- Broken bones, sprains
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Unexplained venereal diseases or infections



Abuse Indicators (cont.)

- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Withdrawn and non responsive
- Emotionally upset or agitated
- Not an exhaustive list



Unique Types of Physical Abuse

In addition to traditional types of physical abuse (hitting, slapping), elder abuse may also include:

- Overmedicating
- Force feeding
- Restraining
- Smothering



NEGLECT



Neglect

The failure of an adult or caretaker to provide goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish or mental illness.

Abandonment, Neglect, Self-neglect



Self Neglect Indicators

- Lack of self-care
- Lack of care to home environment
- Isolation
- Hoarding possessions or animals
- Financial mismanagement



Neglect by Caregiver Indicators

- Adult reports the neglect
- Wandering
- Dehydration and/or malnutrition



Neglect by Caregiver (cont.)

- Untreated medical conditions or bedsores
- Poor personal hygiene
- Desertion of an older adult
- Not an exhaustive list





EXPLOITATION



Exploitation

The unlawful or improper act of an individual using an adult and his or her resources for monetary or personal benefit, profit or gain.



Methods of Financial Exploitation

- Scams and identity theft
- Theft, coercion, and fraud
- Undue influence
- Abuse of legal authority



Exploitation Indicators

- Sudden changes in account or banking practices
- Inclusion of additional names on an account
- Abrupt changes in a will or financial papers
- Checks signed by another without legal authority



Exploitation Indicators (cont.)

- Expensive purchases unwanted or needed
- Utilities, rent or mortgage unpaid
- Prescriptions not paid for
- Disparities between assets and lifestyle
- Not an exhaustive list





Common Excuses

Smoke and Mirrors

Abusers often:

- Lie
- Manipulate
- Charm
- Justify their behavior
- Blame the victim and others



Common Justifications

Blames the Victim

- “She’s clumsy.” (accident)
- “She didn’t do what I wanted.” (victim’s behavior)
- “She started it.” (mutual abuse)
- “He is too difficult to care for.” (caregiver stress)



Common Justifications

Offender Excuses

- “I have a problem with my temper.” (anger)
- “I was drunk or high.” (substance abuse problem)
- “I’m sick. It’s not my fault.” (physical/mental health issue)
- “He hit me when I was a child.” (learned behavior)
- “In my culture, elders share their resources.” (culture)

Possible Dangers

If abusers are believed without investigation

- Victim safety is not addressed
- Victim may not reach out for help again
- Offender not held accountable
- Message to abusers – they can do whatever they want to older victims with no consequences

If You Suspect Abuse...

- It is important that you always report it
- Contact the proper authority
 - Adult Protective Services (community)
 - Long-Term Care Ombudsman (facility)
 - Ohio Department of Health (facility)
 - Law Enforcement (community and facility)



Resources

- Ohio Attorney General's Office
www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov
- Ohio Department of Aging
www.goldenbuckeye.com
- Ohio Department of Health
www.odh.state.oh.us
- Ohio Department of Job & Family Services
www.odjfs.state.oh.us
- Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
www.odmrdd.state.oh.us



References

- National Center on Elder Abuse
- National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
- National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
- Office on Violence Against Women
- Office for Victims of Crime

