

Employees and administrators of nursing homes, personal care homes, domiciliary care homes, adult day care centers, home health care agencies, home care agencies and home care registries who suspect elder abuse are required by law to report it to the Area Agency on Aging.

## You Can Help Prevent Elder Abuse Before It Happens

Family members and close friends are not the only ones in a position to recognize when an older person is at risk of neglect or abuse. Anyone who has contact with an older person may be able to identify signs of abuse.

Many adult children accept the responsibility to care for an older parent or relative without knowing how much time or money will be needed.

If you are faced with the decision of caring for an older family member, be sure to examine your own ability to handle the responsibility as well as the impact on other family members.

- Be realistic about what you can do.
- Know your financial resources and what it will cost to care for the person.
- Seek outside help and support groups.
- Look at your home. Can an older or disabled person move around easily?
- Find out if other family members will lend a hand from time to time.



## Where Can You Get Help?

Your local Area Agency on Aging has support counseling and referral services available to help you. The following organizations can also provide information on caregiving and support services.

### AARP

Pennsylvania Office  
30 North Third St. Suite 750  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
1-866-389-5654 (toll free)

### Children of Aging Parents

P.O. Box 167  
Richboro, PA 18954  
1-800-227-7294 (toll free)

### Long Term Care/Alzheimer's Helpline

1-866-286-3636 (toll free)

### Aging and Disability Resource Centers

1-866-286-3636 (toll free)



## Elder Abuse: Recognize the Signs



Learn how to identify  
elder abuse, report it, and  
even prevent it.

[www.aging.state.pa.us](http://www.aging.state.pa.us)

**Elder Abuse: Recognize the Signs**  
**Toll Free Hotline: 1-800-490-8505**

# Elder Abuse: Recognize the Signs — Toll Free Hotline: 1-800-490-8505



## What Is Elder Abuse?

Each year, hundreds of thousands of older persons are abused, neglected and exploited by family members and others. Many victims are frail and vulnerable, cannot help themselves, and depend on others to meet their most basic needs.

Victims of elder abuse can be male or female. Many times he or she is over 75 years old and is dependent upon a spouse, relative or friend for care, food and shelter. The abuser is likely to be a spouse or adult child who lives in the same house and is a caregiver.

## What Are the Signs?

Elder abuse can present itself in various forms - physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial or material exploitation, neglect, and self-neglect.

But elder abuse is not always easy to identify. It can often be hidden or disguised.

- Bruises or broken bones may be blamed on falls when the real cause is pinching or beating.
- Weight loss may be blamed on illness or lack of appetite when the real cause is starvation, neglect or self-neglect.

- Dementia may be blamed on “old age” when the real cause is malnutrition or drug interactions or side effects.
- Besides physical signs, there are other clues that may indicate elder abuse:
  - A neighbor may notice that the older person next door never goes outside or never sees visitors;
  - A bank teller may find that an older customer, or someone claiming to represent the older person, is withdrawing large sums of money from a savings account without apparent reason; or
  - An attorney might question why an older person would sign over his or her home to a relative.

Although these circumstances do not always mean elder abuse, it's important to be aware that elder abuse can occur at anytime to anyone.

## How Can You Report Elder Abuse?

If you suspect mistreatment of an older person, you should report it to your local Area Agency on Aging or call the Department of Aging's Elder Abuse Hotline - **1-800-490-8505**. You can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your call will be connected to local Protective Services staff in one of the 52 Area Agencies on Aging that serve all 67 counties.

Even if you are not sure abuse has occurred, but feel you have a reason to be concerned about the older person's well-being, you should call the hotline or your local Area Agency on Aging. All calls are confidential.

Unfortunately, many people don't want to become involved when they suspect elder abuse is occurring. Others, including the victim, are afraid of the abuser. The tragic result is that many cases of suspected elder abuse go unreported, and the abuse continues. You can make a difference!

## What Happens When You Report Elder Abuse?

Every Area Agency on Aging you call to report suspected elder abuse has specially trained staff to deal with these situations and to investigate the report. You can report suspected elder abuse anonymously. The staff person will telephone or visit the older person suspected of being abused. If abuse has occurred, steps will be taken to protect the victim, stop the abuse and prevent it from happening again.

The Area Agency on Aging may offer temporary shelter if the victim is in physical danger or provide other protective services. These might include medical care, daytime or overnight care, in-home services, home delivered meals, transportation, counseling, financial or legal advice. The type of services depends on the abused person's immediate needs.

If abuse has not occurred, but the older person or family appears to need assistance, the staff person may refer the family to other services available through the Area Agency on Aging or other agencies.