

# Why Should I Care About Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is an under recognized problem with devastating and even life threatening consequences.

## What is Elder Abuse?

In general, elder abuse refers to intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or “trusted” individual that lead to, or may lead to, harm of a vulnerable elder.

Physical abuse; neglect; emotional or psychological abuse; verbal abuse and threats; financial abuse and exploitation; sexual abuse and abandonment are considered forms of elder abuse. In many states, self-neglect is also considered mistreatment.

## Who is at Risk?

Elder abuse can occur anywhere – in the home, in nursing homes, or other institutions. It affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Based on available information, women and “older” elders are more likely to be victimized. Dementia is a significant risk factor. Mental health and substance abuse issues – of both abusers and victims – are risk factors. Isolation can also contribute to risk.

## TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE

- **Physical abuse:** Use of force to threaten or physically injure an elder.
- **Emotional abuse:** Verbal attacks, threats, rejection, isolation, or belittling acts that cause or could cause mental anguish, pain or distress to a senior.
- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual contact that is forced, tricked, threatened, or otherwise coerced upon an elder, including anyone who is unable to grant consent.
- **Exploitation:** Theft, fraud, misuse or neglect of authority, and use of undue influence as a lever to gain control over an older person’s money or property.
- **Neglect:** A caregiver’s failure or refusal to provide for a vulnerable elder’s safety, physical, or emotional needs.
- **Abandonment:** Desertion of a frail or vulnerable elder by anyone with a duty of care.
- **Self-neglect:** An inability to understand the consequences of one’s own actions or inaction, which leads to, or may lead to, harm or endangerment.

## REPORT ELDER ABUSE

### 24 HOUR HOTLINE – 1-800-490-8505

Abuse reports can be made on behalf of an older adult whether the person lives in their home or in a care facility such as a nursing facility, personal care home, hospital, etc. The reporters may remain anonymous and have legal protection from retaliation, discrimination and civil or criminal prosecution.

**Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse.**