

Elder Abuse: Under-Reported and On The Rise

Many elderly adults are abused in their own homes, in relatives' homes, and even in facilities responsible for their care. If you suspect that an elderly person is at risk from a neglectful or overwhelmed caregiver, or being preyed upon financially, it's important to speak up. Learn about the warning signs of elder abuse, what the risk factors are, and how you can prevent and report the problem.

What is elder abuse?

As elders become more physically frail, they're less able to stand up to bullying and or fight back if attacked. They may not see or hear as well or think as clearly as they used to, leaving openings for unscrupulous people to take advantage of them. Mental or physical ailments may make them more trying companions for the people who live with them.

Many seniors around the world are being abused: harmed in some substantial way often by people who are directly responsible for their care.

In the U.S. alone, more than half a million reports of abuse against elderly Americans reach authorities every year, and millions more cases go unreported.

Financial elder abuse:

This involves unauthorized use of an elderly person's funds or property, either by a caregiver or an outside scam artist. An unscrupulous caregiver might:

- Misuse an elder's personal checks, credit cards, or accounts
- Steal cash, income checks, or household goods
- Forge the elder's signature
- Engage in identity theft

Typical rackets that target elders include:

- Announcements of a "prize" that the elderly person has won but must pay money to claim
- Phony charities
- Investment fraud