Hyde County Hotline, Inc.

24-Hours Crisis Line 252-925-2500

Visit us at: HydeCounty-Hotline.org **Facebook: Hyde County Hotline**

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month

Help Us STOP Elder Abuse!

What Every Faith Leader Needs to Know About Elder Abuse:

Every month one in 10 older adults worldwide experience some form of abuse. But with only 1 in 24 cases of elder abuse reported, the true figures are likely to be much greater. As elders become more physically frail, they're less able to stand up to bullying and or fight back if they are attacked. It's also a good possibility that they are not able to see and hear as well or they may not be able to think as clearly as they used to. This leaves openings for people to take advantage of them.

There are many seniors around the world that are being abused. These individuals are being harmed in some substantial way often by people who are directly responsible for their care.

What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to an older adult. Many states have laws that cover both seniors and adults with disabilities. Laws vary from state to state, but the National Center on Elder Abuse has developed the following descriptions of the general forms of elder abuse:

- Physical Abuse — Inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable elder, or depriving them of a basic need.
- Emotional Abuse — Inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an elder person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- Sexual Abuse — Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- Exploitation — Illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable elder.
- Neglect — Refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.
- Abandonment — The desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

How large a problem is elder abuse?

The number of elder abuse cases is extremely hard to verify. Studies show that between 2 percent and 10 percent of the elderly population have been abused. The Senate Special Committee on Aging estimates that there may be as many as 5 million victims in the United States every year. Further, data indicates that only one out of every fourteen abuse cases are ever reported to authorities. Older people, themselves, are often extremely reluctant to report abuse to the authorities because of fear, shame or dependence on the abuser.

Who are the abusers?

The majority of abusers are family members, i.e., spouses/partners, children, grandchildren, and others. Some factors that may be red flags for abuse include the abuser having problems with alcohol and/or drugs, mental health issues, or being financially dependent on the older person. Other abusers include caregivers (paid and volunteer), "friends," neighbors, fiduciaries, bankers, lawyers, and others.

Who are the abused?

Men and women of all ethnic backgrounds and social status can be victimized by elder abuse. Social isolation and mental impairment (such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease) are two factors that may make an older person more vulnerable to abuse. Women are victims in two-thirds of all elder abuse reports; and the older one is, the greater the chance of becoming a victim of abuse. Studies show that, in some situations, living with someone else (a family member, caregiver or friend) may increase the chances for abuse to occur. A history of domestic violence may also make a senior more susceptible to abuse.

How can faith leaders help?

More than any other demographic group, the elderly are actively involved in or contacted regularly by religious congregations. Clergy and others from one's faith community are among the few, and in many cases, the only people who visit an elderly person's home or care facility.

As a faith leader, you may be in a unique position to observe signs of abuse and neglect by family, paid caregivers, or facility staff. Protecting the elderly from further loss or pain is a mitzvah, a good deed, a spiritual duty. In addition, reporting elder abuse is an ethical, as well as, a legal responsibility.

The healing of the trauma of abuse is facilitated by a healing of the spirit. Bringing hope, forgiveness, and grace is a part of the ministry of religious groups.

How can I know what abuse looks like?

There is no magic way to tell whether or not abuse or neglect is happening. In many cases, your intuition will be telling you that something is amiss. While the following scenarios do not insure that abuse is taking place, they will give you a sense of situations that may warrant a second look. Perhaps an elder seems depressed, scared or anxious when in the presence of her caregiver. Perhaps a congregant tells you that he has just given $10,000 in cash to his much younger "girlfriend" and now he doesn't have enough money for his rent payment. Perhaps a son has just gotten out of jail and has moved in with his mother who now suddenly has stopped regularly attending services or participating in other activities. While risk factors do not necessarily indicate abuse, some signs that there could be a problem are:

- The person reports being afraid or hurt.
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness, and unusual depression may be indicators of emotional abuse.
- Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions, and burns may be an indication of physical abuse, neglect, or mistreatment.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, and unusual weight loss are indicators of possible neglect.
- Behavior such as belittling remarks, threats, and other uses of power and control by spouses are indicators of verbal or emotional abuse.

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Report Elder Abuse!

Who Reports?

YOU DO! If you suspect that someone you know is at risk or is the victim of elder abuse, you must report the suspected abuse to Adult Protective Services at your local Department of Social or Human Services. If you are concerned that an older or disabled adult is in immediate danger, call 911 right away.

Why Report?

Because it's the law! North Carolina law requires reporting when anyone suspects that an older or disabled adult is being abused, neglected or exploited. The reporter's name is always kept confidential and reporters are protected from civil and criminal liability for good faith reports.

How can my congregation help with elder abuse prevention?

There are many ways that faith congregations can assist with elder abuse prevention:

- Create a safe place for abuse victims by making your place of worship a space where victims can come forward for help.
- Display brochures and posters that include the telephone numbers of the Adult Protective Services and domestic violence services in your area.
- Educate the congregation on the warning signs of abuse of elders.
- Routinely include information in newsletters, on bulletin boards and in community meetings.
- Ask someone from an aging services agency to come to speak to your congregation on elder abuse.
- Speak Out Against Elder Abuse.
- Give a sermon on family violence, including elder and disabled adult abuse. The pulpit is a useful and appropriate platform from which to instruct others on treating elders and all people with dignity and respect. As a faith leader you can have a powerful impact on other people's attitudes and beliefs.
- Partner with Community Agencies. Offer meeting space for educational seminars on abuse prevention, or for domestic violence support groups.
- Focus community service projects on elder abuse prevention.
- Intervene. **Do not turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to the clues of elder abuse that are before you. If you suspect that someone in your congregation is a victim of abuse or neglect, speak to that person, speak up for that person!**

  -- *Article contains information provided by the National Center on Elder Abuse*

Love one another as I have loved you.
John 15:12

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Crisis Line Training

Hyde County Hotline is looking for dedicated volunteers who would be willing to attend Crisis Line Training for Hyde County. Volunteers from the mainland and Ocracoke Island are welcome. If you would like a way to reach out to the hurting in your community and give them hope in their time of need, please consider being a volunteer on the Crisis Line. This training is free and the volunteer service can be completed in the comfort and safety of your own home. You choose how many hours you work and when.

The Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our volunteers help us provide confidential, accurate information, referrals and options. Victims are treated with respect and have the right to choose what is right for them without judgment. You will be taught how to answer crisis calls, complete a danger assessment, complete safety planning, and provide needed resources to victims. Victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and human trafficking can access safe shelter and advocacy by calling our **24-Hour Crisis Line at 252-925-2500.**

Please give us a call to let us know you would be interested in taking part in this training. Our office number is 252-925-2502.

Elder Abuse Awareness Month

We are so grateful for our community partners!

We would like to say thank you to the Mattamuskeet Senior Center for allowing us to share programming each month about abuse.

This month we discussed Elder Abuse and decorated cupcakes to celebrate the fact that we have a voice and can speak out against abuse.

If you would like to have Hotline provide programming at your business, church, or civic group please give us a call in our office at 252-925-2502.

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Human Trafficking

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has provided the following information on identifying victims of Human Trafficking:
Everyone can play a role in identifying victims of human trafficking. Health care and social service providers; law enforcement officials; and ethnic, community, and faith-based organizations may encounter victims through their work. An informed community member could also be a victim's link to freedom. It is important to be vigilant and to "look beneath the surface" in situations that don't seem quite right. One chance encounter could be a victim's best hope for rescue.

General Clues to Help Identify Victims of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking may occur in the following situations:

- Prostitution and escort services;
- Pornography, stripping, or exotic dancing;
- Massage parlors;
- Sexual services publicized on the Internet or in newspapers;
- Agricultural or ranch work;
- Factory work or sweatshops;
- Businesses like hotels, nail salons or home-cleaning services;
- Domestic labor (cleaning, childcare, eldercare, etc. within a home);
- Restaurants, bars, or cantinas; or
- Begging, street peddling, or door-to-door sales.

Victims of human trafficking may exhibit any of the following:

- Evidence of being controlled either physically or psychologically;
- Inability to leave home or place of work;
- Inability to speak for oneself or share one's own information;
- Information is provided by someone accompanying the individual;
- Loss of control of one's own identification documents (ID or passport);
- Have few or no personal possessions;
- Owe a large debt that the individual is unable to pay off; or
- Loss of sense of time or space, not knowing where they are or what city or state they are in.

Psychological and Behavioral Clues

Being able to recognize the psychological and emotional consequences of human trafficking can also be helpful in identifying victims.

Victims often:

- Develop general feelings of helplessness, shame, guilt, self-blame, and humiliation.
- Suffer from shock and denial, or display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, panic attacks, anxiety, and depression; and suffer from sleep or eating disorders.
- Become addicted to drugs and/or alcohol as a way to cope with or "escape" their situation, or as a method of control used by their traffickers.
- Become emotionally numb, detached, and disassociated from the physical and psychological trauma.
- Experience "trauma bonding" with the trafficker, positively identifying with the trafficker and believing that, despite repeated abuse, the trafficker is a loving boyfriend, spouse, or parent.

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Physical Effects of Human Trafficking

While not all victims of trafficking have physical indicators that aid identification, many victims suffer serious health issues, some of which may include the following:

- Signs of physical abuse, such as bruises, broken bones, burns, and scarring;
- Chronic back, visual, or hearing problems from work in agriculture, construction, or manufacturing;
- Skin or respiratory problems caused by exposure to agricultural or other chemicals;
- Infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and hepatitis, which are spread in overcrowded, unsanitary environments with limited ventilation;
- Untreated chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease; or
- Reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, pelvic pain and injuries from sexual assault, or forced abortions.

Human Trafficking Facts

"Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of commercial sex or forced labor. They are young children, teenagers, men and women. Trafficking in persons occurs throughout the world, including in the United States.

Many victims of human trafficking are forced to work in prostitution or the sex entertainment industry, but trafficking also occurs in forms of labor exploitation in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Victims of labor trafficking who have been identified in the United States include domestic servants, restaurant staff, hotel employees, factory workers and agricultural laborers.

Traffickers use various techniques to control their victims and keep them enslaved. Some traffickers hold their victims under lock and key. However, the more frequent practice is to use less obvious techniques including:

- Debt bondage – enormous financial obligations or undefined/increasing debt
- Isolation from the public – limiting contact with outsiders and making sure that any contact is monitored or superficial in nature
- Isolation from family members and members of their ethnic and religious community
- Confiscation of passports, visas and/or identification documents
- Use or threat of violence toward victims and/or family members
- The threat of shaming victims by exposing circumstances to family
- Telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact authorities
- Control of the victims' money – e.g., holding their money for "safe-keeping"

If you think you have come into contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.373.7888. The NHTRC can help you identify and coordinate with local organizations that protect and serve trafficking victims.

Thank you to the N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement-Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Program and US DHHS and the North Carolina Human Trafficking Commission for financial support.

Council for Women & Youth Involvement
Department of Administration

FVPSA
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES PROGRAM