

Elder Abuse: Know the Warning Signs



When thinking about domestic violence, an image of young families often comes to mind. But, the truth is, abuse can happen to anyone -no matter the person's age, sex, race, religion, or ethnic or cultural background.

In the U.S. alone, more than half a million reports of elder abuse reach authorities every year and millions more cases go unreported. **ELDER ABUSE** includes physical, emotional, or sexual harm inflicted upon an older adult and financial exploitation or neglect of their welfare by people who are directly responsible for their care. Abuse can happen in many places, including the older person's home, a family member's house, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home. Perpetrators include children, other family members, and spouses - as well as staff at nursing homes, assisted living and other facilities.

Just like any other kind of abuse, elder abuse can take many different forms:

Physical: Inflicting pain or injury through such actions as slapping, hitting, bruising or restraining without a medical reason to do so. Physical abuse can also be inflicted through medication tampering—giving too much or withholding medication.

Sexual: Any nonconsensual sexual contact, whether comprehended or not.

Verbal and Emotional: Inflicting mental anguish or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts such as threatening, intimidating, belittling or humiliating.

Neglect: Failure to provide an older adult with life's necessities: food, clothing, shelter, healthcare or protection.

Financial: Illegal use, misuse or concealment of funds, property, assets or benefits for someone else's gain.

Willful Deprivation: Denying an older adult medication, medical care, shelter, food a therapeutic device, or other physical assistance and exposing that person to the risk of physical, mental or emotional harm.

Abandonment: Desertion of a vulnerable adult.

A Portrait of Elder Abuse

There's an elderly neighbor you've chatted with at civic meetings and church for years. When you see her coming to get her mail as you walk up the street, you slow down and greet her at the mailbox. She says hello but seems wary, as if she doesn't quite recognize you. You have not seen her out of her home and she hasn't been to church since her new caregiver moved in. The caregiver always says she is sleeping when you try to check on her. You ask her about a nasty bruise on her forearm. "Oh, just an accident," she explains; "I bumped into a door." She says goodbye quickly and returns to the house. Something isn't quite right about her. You think about the bruise, her skittish behavior, her absence in public. Well, she's getting pretty old, you think; maybe her mind is getting fuzzy. But there's something else—something isn't right. Could this be elder abuse? If you are asking these questions you need to report the situation.

It's difficult to know how prevalent elder abuse is because it frequently goes unreported.

Because not all seniors are able to communicate incidents of abuse, it's important that those close to them watch for warning signs.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE?

- Frequent arguments between the caregiver and the elderly person
- Drug overdose emergency or apparent failure to take medication regularly (a prescription has more remaining than it should)
- Unexplained bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions, or burns
- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness, unusual depression.
- Sudden changes in financial situation
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, and unusual weight loss
- Behavior on the part of the caretaker such as belittling, threats, and other uses of power and control
- Caregiver's refusal to allow you to see elderly person alone
- Behavior from the elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, thumb sucking, or mumbling to oneself
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, other fire hazards)
- Desertion of the elder at a public place
- Significant withdrawals from the elder's bank or investment accounts

- Items or cash missing from the senior's household
- Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, titles, and policies
- Financial activity the senior couldn't have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden
- Evidence of overmedication
- Inadequate responses from caregiver to questions about care

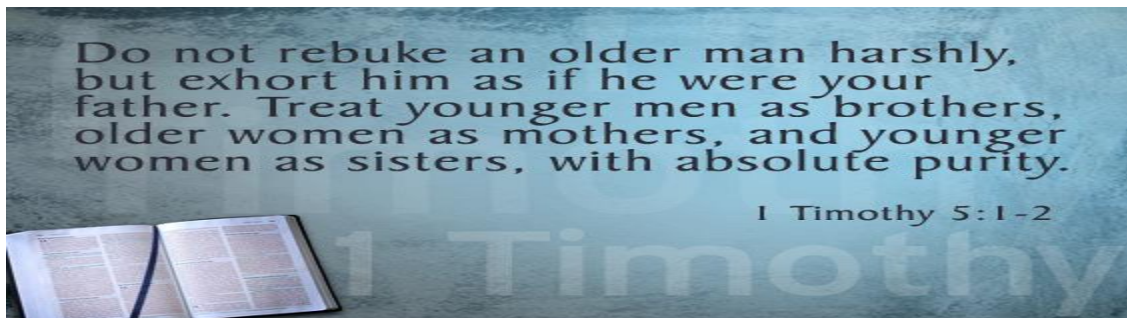
WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ELDER ABUSE?

Elders who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated. While likely under-reported, estimates of elder financial abuse and fraud costs to older Americans range from \$2.9 billion to \$36.5 billion annually. Yet, financial exploitation is self-reported at rates higher than emotional, physical, and sexual abuse or neglect. This makes the need to be aware and know the warning signs very important!

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO FIGHT AGAINST ELDER ABUSE?

- **DO NOT IGNORE IT! It will not go away!**
- **Listen to seniors and their caregivers.**
- **Intervene when you suspect abuse.**
- **Educate yourself and others on how to recognize and report abuse.**
- **Pastors educate the congregation on the subject of violence against elders and fraud and abuse of elders. Give a sermon and prepare newsletter articles that mention abuse in vulnerable populations. Make it clear that this type of behavior is not condoned.**
- **Create a safe place for older adults by making your church a place where elderly victims can come for help.**

If you suspect elder abuse and you have reason to believe the elder is in imminent danger, call 911 immediately. If you are not aware of immediate danger, but you suspect the older adult is being abused contact the Department of Social Services.



Hyde County Hotline, Inc.
24-Hours Crisis Line
252-925-2500

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

What We Do

- Crisis Intervention
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence Advocacy
- Survivor Services
- Safe Shelter
- Safety Planning
- Support Groups and Referrals
- Program Presentations for Adults and Children in Churches, Businesses and Schools
- Referrals

How You Can Help...

- *Ask how we can help you*
- *Ask us about presentations*
- *Tell Others about us*
- *Become a Crisis Line Volunteer*
- *Donate to our Thrift Store*
- *Ask for a copy of our shelter needs list*
- *Monetary Donations are accepted*

We are so thankful for our volunteers!



You make a world of difference in the lives of the families we serve!

If you would like to know more about programming in your church or business or to volunteer please call our office at 252-925-2502.

We would love to meet with you!



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

Dear Supporters,

We have been so blessed by your support of Hyde County Hotline's shelter - Ashely and Debbie's House of Faith, Hope, and Love! We would like to extend the opportunity for you to continue to care for and give hope to the victims of domestic abuse and sexual victimization that we serve.

Below is a "Wish List" of needs for the shelter that are ongoing. We ask that your church, community group, or business consider showing your support by donating some of the items listed:

Toiletries:

- *Toothbrushes
- *Feminine Hygiene Products
- *Toothpaste
- *Shampoo
- *Hairspray
- *Conditioner
- *Hair Gel
- *Lotions
- *Bath Soap
- *Razors
- *Deodorant
- *Combs/Brushes

Paper Goods:

- *Toilet Paper
- *Paper Towels
- *Disposable Plates
- *Disposable Cups
- *Disposable Bowls
- *Disposable Utensils
- *Kleenex

Baby Items:

- *Diapers
- *Diaper Wipes
- *Clothing
- *Diaper Rash Cream
- *Baby Lotion
- *Baby Wash
- *Baby Shampoo

Linens:

- *Full Size Sheets
(White Preferred)

Supplies:

- *Cleaning Supplies
- *Dish Soap
- *Laundry Soap
- *Dryer Sheets
- *Cleaning Rags
- *Plastic Garbage Bags (All Sizes)
- *Light Bulbs

Misc. Items:

- *Journals
- *Non-Violent
Books/magazines
- *Stationery
- *Stamps
- *Envelops
- *Holiday Decorations
- *First Aid Kit/Fillers

The need for cash donations and grocery items will be ongoing.

For further information on how you can help please call the shelter at 252-925-2502 or e-mail me at aghydecountyhotline@gmail.com.

We appreciate all you do!
Blessings,

Alisa A. Greer
Community Outreach Advocate