



ELDER/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION PUBLIC AWARENESS FACT SHEET



- Each year in the United States, 1 to 2 million reports of elderly and vulnerable adult abuse are made; however, the real number of victims is even higher because most cases are not reported.
- It is estimated that only 1 in 14 cases of elderly and vulnerable adult abuse is reported.
- The Maryland Attorney General's Office, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, investigates and prosecutes incidents of abuse and neglect of vulnerable persons residing in facilities which receive Medicaid funds and in assisted living facilities. **The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit received 363 referrals regarding abuse and neglect of vulnerable persons in FY 2015.** Each referral is reviewed and either investigated for criminal prosecution or referred to the appropriate regulatory agency. The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit also provides education and outreach to providers on how to prevent abuse and neglect as well as what to do if abuse or neglect occurs at a facility. For more information on protecting seniors from abuse and neglect, contact the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit at 410-576-6521 or at MedicaidFraud@oag.state.md.us.
- The Maryland Department of Aging, Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, receives, investigates, and resolves complaints made by or on behalf of long term care residents. **Of the 3,603 complaints investigated by the Ombudsman Program in FY 2015, 192 of the investigated reports were alleged resident abuse cases.** For more information about programs and services for seniors, call the Maryland Department of Aging at 410-767-1100, toll-free 1-800-243-3425, or on the web at www.aging.maryland.gov.
- The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Health Care Quality, receives allegations of abuse and neglect regarding residents/patients in all licensed and/or federally certified facilities. **In 2015, the Office of Health Care Quality received approximately 1,138 reports of alleged vulnerable adult abuse and neglect.** For more information about Office of Health Care Quality programs, please call 410-402-8108, toll-free 1-877-402-8219, or on the web at www.dhmh.maryland.gov/ohcq.
- The Maryland Department of Human Resources, Office of Adult Services, Adult Protective Services Program, investigates allegations of adult abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation of an elderly or disabled vulnerable adult in a community-based setting. **In FY 2015, the Adult Protective Services Program received approximately 7,237 reports of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults 18 years of age and older. Of these cases, 1,507 involved continuing Adult Protective Services case management services to monitor and assist in reducing on-going risk factors.** For more information about adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation, contact the Maryland Department of Human Resources at 410-767-7000, toll-free 1-800-917-7383, or on the web at www.dhr.maryland.gov.
- The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP), provides community-based services to victims of domestic violence. **In 2015, the GOCCP served more than 6,357 victims of domestic violence who were 60 years of age or older.** For more information about services available to victims of domestic violence, contact the GOCCP at 410-821-2828, toll-free 1-877-687-9004, or on the web at www.goccp.maryland.gov.
- The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is a coalition of domestic violence programs, law enforcement agencies, and concerned citizens. **The MNADV reported that in 2015, 8 (19%) of the 42 persons killed in domestic violence incidents were 51 years of age or older.** For more information on the coalition's mission and services contact MNADV at 301- 429-3601, toll free 1-800-MD-HELPS, or on the web at <http://mnadv.org>.

Elder Abuse

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 older adult.

Types of Abuse:

- **Physical Abuse** - Is the use of force causing harm or pain to an individual, which includes but not limited to hitting, kicking, pinching, slapping, shoving, shaking, and burning. Other forms of physical abuse involve the inappropriate use of medication or physical restraints.
- **Financial Abuse/Exploitation** - Involves wrongfully taking or using a vulnerable older adult's funds or property through theft, scams, fraud, or predatory lending.
- **Psychological Abuse** - Causing emotional pain through verbal assaults, threats, or harassment. Perpetrators intimidate, humiliate, or attempt to isolate their victims.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Is non-consensual sexual contact of any kind including, contact with an individual unable to consent to such contact - for instance, if they suffer from dementia and are unable to understand.
- **Neglect** - Is an individual failing or refusing to meet the needs of a vulnerable older adult who is under their care. This includes not providing essential things a person needs, such as food, water, shelter, clothing, or personal hygiene.
- **Self-Neglect** - Involves failure of a person to meet vital self care needs, putting them at risk of harm for their safety and/or health.

Red Flags:

- **Physical/Sexual Abuse** - inadequately explained cuts, wounds, sores, bruises, welts, burns, or fractures; undernourished; dehydrated; unexplained sexually transmitted diseases
- **Financial Abuse/Exploitation** - unusual bank account activity; change in spending habits; unpaid bills; vulnerable older adult has signed property transfers (Power of Attorney, new will, etc.) but is unable to comprehend the transaction or what it means; caregiver has control of vulnerable older adult's money but is failing to provide for vulnerable adult's needs
- **Psychological Abuse** - unexplained or uncharacteristic changes in behavior, such as withdrawal from normal activities; confusion; anger; depression; fear; helplessness; shame; caregiver isolates vulnerable older adult; caregiver is verbally aggressive or demeaning, controlling, or uncaring
- **Neglect/Self-Neglect** - lack of basic hygiene, adequate food, or clean and appropriate clothing; untreated medical condition; lack of medical aids (glasses, walker, hearing aids, medications); person with dementia left unsupervised; person confined to bed left without care; home cluttered, filthy, containing safety hazards, lacking adequate amenities (stove, refrigerator, heat, cooling, working plumbing and electricity); untreated pressure sores

To report suspected abuse or to get help...

In the community:

- Call 1-800-91-PREVENT (917-7383); or,
- Contact the Local Adult Protective Services (http://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/?page_id=4531)

In Nursing Homes or Assisted Living Facilities:

- Contact the Long Term Care Ombudsman (<http://aging.maryland.gov/egov/Documents/OmbudsmanLocation.pdf>); or,
- Contact the DHMH Office of Health Care Quality (<http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ohcq/SitePages/Home.aspx>)

Remember: You do not need to prove that abuse is occurring; it is up to the professionals to investigate the suspicions; many cases of abuse go undetected, please do not assume that someone has already reported a suspicious situation.