NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

NCADV

Domestic Abuse in Later Life

WHAT IS ABUSE IN LATER LIFE?

Abuse in later life comprises financial, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, abandonment and neglect.[i] Perpetrators are people with whom the victim has an expectation of trust, particularly spouses, intimate partners, adult children, grandchildren, other family members, and non-related caregivers.[ii] Perpetrators typically, but not exclusively, abuse older adults in their places of residence.[iii]

DID YOU KNOW?

- Every year, approximately 4 million older Americans are victims of physical, psychological and/or other forms of abuse and neglect.[iv]
- Older adults who require assistance with daily life activities are at increased risk of being emotional abused or financially exploited.[v]
- Approximately 50% of older adults with dementia are mistreated or abused.[vi]
- An estimated 13.5% of older adults have suffered emotional abuse since the age of 60.[vii]
- Victims of elder financial abuse lost an estimated $2.9 billion in 2011.[viii]
- 76.1% of physical abuse toward older adults is perpetrated by a family member.[ix]
- A majority of elder sexual abuse cases involve female victims and male perpetrators.[x]
- Only 1 out of every 24 cases of elder abuse is reported.[xi]
- Only 15.5% of elder sexual abuse is reported to police.[xii]

WHY IT MATTERS

Abuse in later life has a devastating impact on victims and can result in the loss of independence, security, life savings, health, dignity, and can be deadly.[xiii] Research indicates that older adult victims of abuse have shorter lifespans than their peers who do not experience violence.[xiv] Abuse in later life can cause both physical and psychological harm. Psychological harms associated with abuse in later life include depression, stress, helplessness, alienation, guilt, shame, fear, and anxiety.[xv]

TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse includes:

- Embarrassment and humiliation
- Controlling behavior (restricting access to telephone, transportation, and other resources)
- Damaging or destroying property
- Social isolation
- Disregarding or trivializing needs[xvi]

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse of an elder involves injury, assault, or inappropriate restraint.[xvii] Indicators include:

- Broken bones, fractures, sprains, and/or dislocations
- Burns from cigarettes, hot water, or appliances
- Abrasions on arms, legs, or torso resembling rope or restraints
- Bruises, including bilateral and “wrap around” bruises

If you need help:

Call The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Or, online go to DomesticShelters.org

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- Unexplained injuries or explanations that do not "fit"
- History of similar injuries and numerous or suspicious hospital visits
- Delay between onset of injury and seeking medical attention
- Neglect of bedridden adults' injuries[xviii, xix]

SEXUAL ABUSE

Elder sexual abuse is any non-consensual sexual contact:

- Non-consensual oral, anal or vaginal intercourse
- Forced viewing of pornography[xx]
- Forced listening of sexual accounts
- Intentional touching of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, mouth, inner thigh, or buttocks[xxi, xxii]

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Fraud
- Forced property transfers[xxiii]
- Misuse or theft of money/possessions[xxiv]
- Use of deception to coerce or convince a victim to surrender finances or property

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[i] "Elder Abuse: Definitions." *Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 Jan. 2014. Web.
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[xi] *Elder Abuse and Neglect: In Search of Solutions*. Rep. American Psychological Association, 2012. Web. <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/guides/elder-abuse.pdf>.
[xii] "Definitions." *National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life*. Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, n.d. Web. <http://ncall.us/content/definitions>.
[xiii] "Elder Abuse Facts." *www.alfa.org*. Assisted Living Federation of America, 2013. Web.
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[xvii] *Elderly Victims of Sexual Abuse and Their Offenders*. Rep. National Institute of Justice, 20 June 2006. Web. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/216550.pdf>.
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