

ELDER ABUSE

SAFETY PREVENTION TIPS



Elder abuse occurs amongst older adults 60 and up. The different type of abuses are physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, and abandonment. Perpetrators include adult children, other family members, and spouses - as well as staff at nursing homes, assisted living, and other facilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Around **1 in 6 people 60 years and older** experienced some form of **abuse in community settings** during the past year (*who.int – World Health Organization*)
- In 2020 there were **20,929 elder abuse allegations** in Harris County (*dfps.states.tx.us – Department of Family and Protective Services*)
- From 2002 to 2016 **over 19,000 elder abuse homicides** occurred (*cdc.gov*)
- In almost **60%** of elder abuse and neglect incidents, **the perpetrator is a family member**. Two thirds of perpetrators are adult children or spouses. (*ncoa.org – National Council on Aging*)
- Rates of elder abuse are high in institutions such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, with **2 in 3 staff** reporting that they **have committed abuse** in the past year (*who.int -World Health Organization*)

PREVENTION



It is crucial to understand the different types of abuse that occurs amongst the elderly population as well as recognizing the signs of abuse to help prevent our loved ones from victimization.

- **Physical Abuse:** Any intentional use of force that results in serious illness, injury, pain, and function impairment. **Signs** can include but are not limited to bruises, pressure marks or sores, broken bones, abrasions, and burns.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Any form of verbal or nonverbal psychological maltreatment that results in inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress. **Signs** can include withdrawal from normal activities, low self-esteem, appears depressed or withdrawn, seems scared, or hopeless, self-injury, acute mood swings, and changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any non-consensual contact of any kind. **Signs** can include bruises or injury to the genital area which may present as difficulty moving or sitting, signs of PTSD, agitation, socially or emotionally withdrawn, and suicide attempts.
- **Neglect/Abandonment:** Elder **neglect** is when any caregivers or other responsible parties fail to provide necessities such as food, shelter, health care, and/or protection. **Signs** for neglect can include loss of weight, displaying signs of trauma like rocking back and forth, acting agitated or violent, ceasing to participate in activities typically enjoyed, unkempt appearance, and unsanitary living conditions. **Abandonment** occurs when a caregiver or responsible parties permanently abandons an elderly in their care. **Signs** of abandonment can include absence of necessities, untreated or unexplained worsening of medical or mental health conditions, inadequate or unsafe living environment, animal or insect infestations, dehydration, or malnutrition.
- **Financial Exploitation:** Any unauthorized use of an elderly person's money and/or property. **Signs** can include forging signatures, forcing an elderly to sign documents, stealing property or money, false promises in exchange for money or property, and unauthorized credit card charges.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

Empowering our elderly population to use their voice and express any concerns that are troubling is paramount. If your loved one is currently under your care or the care of a nursing home, it is important to communicate personal safety conversations as well as visiting them regularly to ensure their needs are being met.

Ask your loved one:

- Is there anyone or anything that is currently making you feel uncomfortable?
- Are you receiving appropriate necessities?
- Are you in need of any resources?

Ask yourself?

- Do I know where to report if I suspect and/or witness elderly abuse?
- Does my loved one understand the different signs of elderly abuse?



PARTNERS & RESOURCES

- **Adult Protective Services:** investigates abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities and who live in the community. www.dfps.state.tx.us
- **Harris County District Attorney's Office:** dedicated to making our community safer through evidence-based prosecution and equal justice for all. This means guaranteeing a fair process to obtain a just result for the victim, the accused and the community in every case. app.dao.hctx.net
- **Harris County Justice Center:** serves the complex and unique needs of senior victims of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation. esources.harriscountytexas.gov
- **AARP Texas:** AARP Texas works to help those age 50-plus live, work, and thrive. states.aarp.org/texas/
- **FBI Houston:** The FBI's mission is to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution of the United States. This includes our elderly loved ones. www.fbi.gov
- **AGE of Central Texas:** helps older adults and their caregivers thrive as they navigate the realities and opportunities of aging and caregiving. ageofcentraltexas.org



WHERE TO REPORT

- Report Anonymously to Crime Stoppers at 713-222-TIPS (8477)
- Report to Adult Protective Services: 1-800-252-5400 OR txabusehotline.org



LOCAL OFFICIALS



Officer

Detains individual and contacts DA to see if they will accept charges. If charges are accepted, arrest is made and officer books individual.



DA

Analyze and gather evidence to determine whether there are grounds for prosecution. Gives approval for arrest.



Magistrate

Appointed by the judge. Given authority to sometimes determine if individual will be released on bond or detained in Jail.



Judge

Appoints magistrates and oversees outcomes of court proceedings.