

## **STATISTICS OF ELDER ABUSE**

Statistics of elder abuse are frightening. One in every 20 elderly people will be a victim of one or more forms of elder abuse this year.

The problem may get worse as the number of elderly Americans increases. People over the age of 65 will number about 52 million this year. Those aged 85 years or older are the fastest growing group.

As the elderly population grows, so will the incidents of elder abuse. But there are steps we can take to recognize the problem and prevent it.

## **TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE**

There are four general categories of elder abuse:

### **Physical Abuse**

### **Psychological / Emotional Abuse**

### **Financial Abuse**

### **Neglect / Self-Neglect**

**Physical Abuse** is defined as the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Some signs and symptoms of this type of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- bruises, black eyes, welts, lacerations, cuts;
- open wounds, sprains, broken bones;
- broken eyeglasses/frames, physical signs of being subjected to punishment;
- an elder's sudden change in behavior.

**Psychological Abuse** is defined as the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts. Some signs and symptoms of this type of abuse include but are not limited to:

- being emotionally upset or agitated;
- being extremely withdrawn and non-communicative or non-responsive;
- an elder's report of being verbally or emotionally mistreated.

**Financial Abuse** is defined as the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets. Some signs and symptoms of this type of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- unexplained disappearance of funds or valuable possessions;
- a person charging an elder outrageous sums to do small errands.

**Neglect** is defined as the refusal or failure to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elder, or the failure on the part of an in-home service provider to provide necessary care. Some signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- unsanitary and unclean living conditions;
- dehydration, malnutrition, and poor personal hygiene.

**Self-Neglect** is characterized as the behavior of an elderly person that threatens his own health or safety. Self-neglect generally manifests itself in an older person as a refusal or failure to provide himself with adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, and safety precautions. This definition **excludes** a situation in which a competent older person, who understands the consequences of his decisions, makes a conscious and voluntary decision to engage in acts that threaten his health or safety as a matter of personal choice. Signs and symptoms to this type of abuse are the same as defined above.

The following cases illustrate the four generally recognized types of elder abuse. Some cases involve more than one type of abusive behavior, such as the abuser victimizing the elderly person both physically and emotionally.

### **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Mary Smith, 67, was assaulted several times by her son, who was living with her. Neighbors called the police, but the victim and son denied everything, claiming instead that the neighbors and police were harassing them!

The abuse continued until finally it was so bad, Mrs. Smith needed to be hospitalized. Although Mrs. Smith still did not want to press charges, the injuries were severe enough that the son was arrested and charged with felony elder abuse.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL / EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

Sara Young, a legally blind and wheelchair-bound woman in her 60's, told a neighbor that she was afraid her husband was going to kill her. He had threatened her with a knife. The neighbor called the police.

Mrs. Young revealed that her husband never let her leave their apartment and had kept her a prisoner. He had also refused to take her to the doctor, so her health condition had worsened due to the lack of medical attention.

With the help of a social worker, Mrs. Young obtained her own apartment adapted for a wheelchair and qualified for SSI and In-Home Support Services. She also got involved in recreational and social programs and received appropriate care for her medical condition.

### **FINANCIAL ABUSE**

Bill Davis had a history of alcoholism and his mental condition was such that he was very forgetful. The 70-year-old man had suffered a fall that resulted in a broken hip. Unable to shop for himself, he was befriended by a woman who offered to help him with shopping and cooking.

The woman quickly gained his trust and began asking for money. Mr. Davis wrote checks to the woman, but a short time later would forget that he had done so. The woman kept asking for more money, and forgetting the previous check, Mr. Davis would write another.

Mr. Davis' daughter became suspicious when her father told her his rent check had bounced and he was unable to pay his other bills. The police were called to investigate the situation. Eventually the woman was arrested for fiduciary abuse.

## **NEGLECT**

Carolyn Mays was a confused and incontinent 90-year-old woman who was cared for by her granddaughter. On one occasion she was found in saturated adult diapers, and on another, she was restrained with ropes around her wrists and had several bruises on her face.

While the granddaughter appeared to care about her grandmother and tried hard to meet her needs, Mrs. Mays required around-the-clock care. Her doctor stated that she needed nursing home care. Adult protective services staff investigated and successfully placed Mrs. Mays in a nursing home.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

We all have the right to be free from abuse and neglect. If an elderly person you know is being victimized, it is important for you to take action to stop it. The types of abuse discussed above could happen to any of our family members, friends, or neighbors. Without intervention, abuse almost always escalates. Because victims are often reluctant to report abuse, a person's well-being may depend on you to recognize and report suspected abuse.

It is important to know that more than two-thirds of elder abuse perpetrators are family members of the victims or close family friends, typically serving in a caregiving role. When elder abuse occurs, it can be addressed – if it comes to the attention of authorities.

## **Reporting Elder Abuse**

Reporting suspected elder abuse is simple. Call the police or report incidents to the county Adult Protective Service agency (APS).

If you suspect abuse that seems life threatening don't wait, call the police immediately. They will notify any other agency that may need to be involved.

Below is a list of various numbers where you can receive assistance:

- Oakland Housing Authority Police  
(510) 535-3100
- Alameda County Adult Protective Services  
(510) 567-6894
- Oakland Housing Authority Resident  
Community Services  
  
West District (510) 874-1588  
  
East District (510) 777-4157
- Housing Authority Manager Lonetta Evans  
(510) 777-4186
- Victim/Witness Assistance Program  
(Oakland) (510) 272-6180
- Alameda County Health Care ACCESS  
1-800-491-9099
- Alameda County Area Agency on Aging  
Senior Information  
1-800-510-2020
- Brown Bag Program (Oakland)  
(510) 534-8540
- Alameda County Community Food Bank  
(Oakland) (510) 568-3663
- Senior Center (Downtown Oakland)  
(510) 238-3284

# ELDER ABUSE



Oakland Housing Authority  
Police Department  
1180 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94601