

Decatur Police Department



Elder abuse is defined as “any intentional or negligent action that harms or creates the risk of harm to a vulnerable older adult”.

The National Center on Elder Abuse, part of the U.S. Administration on Aging, defines these commonly acknowledged types of elder abuse:

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable elder, or depriving them of a basic need.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an elder person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- **Exploitation:** Illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable elder.
- **Neglect:** Refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.
- **Abandonment:** The desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

*Every person - no matter how young or old - deserves to be safe from harm by those who live with them, care for them, or come in day-to-day contact with them. Here are some warning signs that some form of Elder Abuse may be occurring.

Signs and symptoms of specific types of abuse

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on two side of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (a prescription has more remaining than it should)
- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists
- Caregiver’s refusal to allow you to see the elder alone

Emotional Abuse

- Threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver behavior that you witness
- Behavior from the elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling to oneself

Sexual Abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

Neglect by Caregivers and Self Neglect

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores
- Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- 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

Financial Exploitation

- Significant withdrawals from the elder's accounts
- Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition
- Items or cash missing from the senior's household
- Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, titles, and policies
- Addition of names to the senior's signature card
- Unpaid bills or lack of medical care, although the elder has enough money to pay for them
- Financial activity the senior couldn't have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden
- Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions

Healthcare Fraud and Abuse

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of overmedication or under medicated
- Evidence of inadequate care when bills are paid in full

- Problems with the care facility:
 - Poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff
 - Crowding
 - Inadequate responses to questions about care

Who can Report Elder Abuse?

Anyone can report a case of elder abuse in good faith.

The Elder Abuse and Neglect Act provides that people – who in good faith report suspected abuse or cooperate with an investigation – are immune from criminal or civil liability or professional disciplinary action. It further provides that the identity of the reporter shall not be disclosed except with the written permission of the reporter or by order of a court. Anonymous reports are accepted.