

## Prevention for the Individual

### From Family Member Abuse...

- Do not live with a family member who is or has been abusive to you or anyone else in the past.
- If your family member has a history of abuse, you may wish to have someone else assist you.
- Catch stress early on-educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of caregiver stress.
- Receive help from others-if you do everything on your own, you may feel burnt out.
- If you cannot afford (in mind and finance) your loved one to live with you, seek other options-If not, you may resent your loved one in the future.
- Speak to your friends, if you feel you are being taken advantage of, talk to someone about it.
- Review your will. If you make changes, be sure it is because YOU want to, not because of pressure from family members
- Have friends and/or neighbors visit you often.
- Seek legal advice when making decisions.
- Have your social security or pension check deposited directly into your account.
- If you are going to sign a Power of Attorney, speak to your lawyer first. Make sure you have listed out what you want to occur.
- Do not sign anything until you have read it. If you have difficulty understanding the legal terms, seek out a lawyer and have him/her explain it to you.
- Become involved with the community, join clubs and activities.
- Start early, make as many arrangements as you can.

If someone you care about is in imminent danger, call 911, police or hospital emergency NOW!

## Prevention for the Individual

### From Stranger Abuse...

- Do not leave your doors unlocked, even if you are home during the day.
- When you leave the house, you can leave on a television or radio.
- Before going to bed at night, make sure the doors are locked and the windows are sealed.
- Do not open the door to strangers. And, don't be afraid to ask for ID if they say they are the police.
- If you receive many prank calls, you can get your phone number changed and have it unlisted.
- If you feel someone is stalking (or watching) you, inform others. Let family and friends know what is going on.
- Find out if your neighborhood is part of the NeighborHood Watch program. It's where neighbors look after each other during the day and night. The neighbors take special notice of strangers prowling the neighborhood.
- Don't take your wallet out while walking down the street. It may get stolen.
- When shopping in a store, make sure you get the correct change or receive your credit card back. There have been incidents where cashiers will hand back the incorrect change on purpose, thinking that you won't notice or that if you do notice you will think that you must have made a mistake.
- Be careful of scams. If someone asks you to put in money for an investment, seek advice from a professional such as a lawyers.
  - When having repairs for your car or home, you may want to get at least two estimates. That way you will know that you are not being over priced. For example, something that usually cost \$50, should not be charged \$300.



# ELDER ABUSE

## What you can do about Elder Abuse

Don't let your fear of meddling in someone else's business stop you from reporting your suspicions. You could be saving someone's life.

## What should I do if someone I know is being abused?

Most states have laws that require professionals to report abuse. Concerned citizens are also encouraged to report. These laws shield reporters from liability in the event that the report turns out to be unfounded.



Every Year, more than two million disabled and elderly citizens are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

To whom should I report? Each state designates a lead agency or agencies to assume responsibility for investigating abuse reports. Typically one of the following agencies will investigate:

- Adult protective services (APS) is the primary agency to accept reports in most states. Check your phone directory for the APS program in your community. In most communities, it is listed under the Department of Human Services or Social Services.
- Law enforcement is responsible for investigating abuse when it is criminal.
- Long-term care ombudsman programs are federally funded programs that investigate reports of abuse in nursing homes and residential care facilities.
- Medicaid fraud and control units: Under federal law, prosecute fraud and patient abuse or neglect in health care facilities that participate in Medicaid.

Call Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 for an agency in your area.

## What will happen if I report the abuse?

Although procedures vary from state to state, typically it will trigger an investigation to assess the following:

- Is the subject of the report in imminent danger?
- Is the person in need of emergency services to prevent injury or loss?
- What is the nature and extent of the abuse?
- Is abuse likely to occur again?
- What is the level of risk?
- Is the person able to make decisions about his or her care?
- What measures are needed to prevent further abuse and ensure the well being of the elder or dependent adult.

The answers to these questions will direct investigators' response. In most cases, they will offer to help victims access to appropriate services. Adult protective services are voluntary. That means that the subject of a report has the right to refuse services (in some states, they can stop an investigation) unless one of the following two conditions apply:

- If the vulnerable older person lacks sufficient mental capacity to protect him or herself, involuntary measures, such as protective placements, may be initiated.
- If a crime has been committed, police may take action.

Unless either of these conditions applies, vulnerable persons are free to decide whether or not they want help, and the type of help they want.

## Possible Causes of Elder Abuse

Only 10% of the elderly who need care resides in a long term care facility. This leaves 90% of the elderly either living in their own home or with their family. Not all caregivers abuse their loved ones. However, it is important to know the warning signs just in case you suspect a family member or in case you may be at risk for abuse.

Elder abuse by family may occur because of:

- Caregiver burnout-caregivers feeling the day to day pressures of caregiving and not receiving help when needed.
- Caregiver stress-caregivers not detecting stress early on and taking it out on loved ones.
- Psychological and emotional problems of the family member-caregivers may have had an emotional or psychological problem as a child.
- History repeating itself if the caregiver was abused-the caregiver grew up in an abusive home.
- Caregivers who have an alcohol or addiction problem-alcohol and drug use can determine behaviors.
- Economic conditions-caregivers may feel pressure if unemployed and take it out on the loved one; blaming the loved one
- Living arrangements-the caregiver may live in a small home and not have enough room for the loved one.
- Not wanting to be a caregiver-the caregiver may feel like they don't have to provide care and resent the individual who is being cared for.

If you know someone is being abused, call Southern Valley Alliance for Battered Women at 952-873-4214