

WHAT CAN I DO IF I SUSPECT ELDER ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION?

Observing signs of abuse

Since a victim may not be able to report abuse, it's up to others to observe the signs and intervene.

Physical indicators can suggest abuse is occurring

- Injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation for their cause
- Bruises, welts, cuts, burns
- Dehydration or malnutrition without illness-related cause

Behavioral signs shown by the victim indicating possible abuse

- Fear, anxiety, agitation, anger, depression
- Contradictory statements, implausible explanations for injuries
- Hesitation to talk openly

Patterns seen in caretakers who abuse

- History of substance abuse, mental illness, criminal behavior or family violence
- Anger, indifference, aggressive behavior toward the victim
- Prevents victim from speaking to or seeing visitors
- Flirtation or coyness as possible indicator of inappropriate sexual relationships
- Conflicting accounts of incidents

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Types of abuse	Definition of abuse
Physical abuse	Intentional bodily injury
Sexual abuse	Nonconsensual sexual contact (any unwanted sexual contact).
Emotional abuse	Infliction of mental anguish or pain
Financial abuse/exploitation	Illegal or improper use of funds or other resources
Neglect	Through action or inaction, depriving care necessary to maintain the person's physical or mental health
Self-neglect	Behavior that threatens one's own health or safety
Abandonment	Action or inaction that leaves the vulnerable person without the ability to obtain food, clothing, shelter or care



Signs a vulnerable person is being financially exploited

- Frequent expensive gifts from victim to a caretaker or “new best friend”
- Drafting a new will or power of attorney when the victim seems incapable of drafting legal documents
- Caretaker’s name (or the name of the victim’s “new best friend”) is added to the bank account
- Frequent checks made out to “cash”
- Unusual activity in bank account
- Sudden changes in spending patterns

What to do if you identify someone at risk

We all need to vigilantly look for abuse around every corner of our neighborhood and in the care facilities we visit. One problem, though, is that our culture has taught us to avert our eyes, cover our ears and mind our own business.

If you are concerned about a vulnerable adult, **call 911** or your local adult protective services agency. In Washington State, call **866-END-HARM**.

Many families also contact us at Aging Wisdom. We can provide an unbiased look at the situation, facilitate family meetings to discuss concerns and provide information about care options or ways to approach the situation.

We understand the laws concerning elder abuse and can help navigate complicated bureaucracies, act as an advocate for the older person and help develop a safe plan of care. We work hand in hand with adult protective service caseworkers, police departments and elder law attorneys to ensure the safety of the older person and to coordinate appropriate services.

It is human nature to want to put our heads in the sand and change the subject to something more pleasant. But if we identify and report abuse when it occurs, we can stop the cycle and protect our most vulnerable elders.

Are any of these signs familiar? Not sure what to do next? Contact Aging Wisdom and one of our Aging Life Care Professionals™ can provide expert consultation and care management. With an objective perspective on the situation, we facilitate difficult family discussions and decision-making to address these and other concerns.

To meet with an Aging Wisdom Aging Life Care Professional, please call **206.456.5155, ext. 1**, or email us at jgray@agingwisdom.com

