

# Fact Sheet: Elder Abuse Victimization

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## Elder Abuse Victimization: The Facts

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### Who is Considered an Elderly Person?

An elderly person is someone aged 65 years or older.<sup>1</sup>

### Examples of Elder Abuse

Categories of elder abuse include physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, or financial abuse and neglect.<sup>2</sup> Neglect can be perpetrated by an abusive person or can be self-inflicted.

### Have you Heard?

- ◇ In the United States, approximately 10% of people over the age of 60 have suffered from elder abuse.<sup>3</sup> Since elderly people are nervous to report their abuse to their loved ones, this rate is likely to be an underestimation.<sup>4</sup>
- ◇ For financial abuse, the most common perpetrators are family, succeeded by friends, neighbors, and home care aids.<sup>5</sup>
- ◇ Facilities such as nursing homes and long-term care establishments have high rates of elder abuse.<sup>4</sup>
- ◇ As populations age, the rates of elder abuse are expected to rise.<sup>4</sup>

### Risk Factors

There are many factors that can lead to an elderly person having an increased risk of victimization. Social isolation and mental impairment such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease can cause an elderly person to be more susceptible to abuse.<sup>6</sup> Other factors include complications with physical or mental health, substance abuse, and stress and coping. Self-blaming, rationalizing others' abuse toward them, and self-depreciative attitudes also increase an elderly person's risk of victimization. In addition, a higher risk of victimization can be correlated with depending on others for caretaking, prior victimization, and poor relationships, especially with the abuser.<sup>7</sup>

### Consequences

Elder abuse can have physical, emotional, behavioral, and financial consequences. Physical consequences can include injuries, dehydration, unusual weight loss, unsanitary living conditions, poor hygiene, and unattended medical needs. Emotional and behavioral signs may include increased fear, depression, or anxiety, isolation and withdrawal from loved ones and normal activities, and unusual changes in behavior or sleep patterns. Financial signs may include fraudulent signatures or documents, unpaid bills, and unusual changes made to spending patterns, estate planning documents, or financial documents.<sup>6</sup>

### Prevention Strategies

There are many ways that elderly people can protect themselves from being victimized. Prevention strategies include:

- ◇ Having healthy goals<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Seeking help for substance abuse or mental health problems<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Attending support groups for domestic violence survivors<sup>6</sup>

- ◇ Making plans for the future<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Being engaged in the community<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Handling mail<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Safeguarding personal information from strangers<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Utilizing direct deposit<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Maintaining a phone line<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Being aware of the conditions and terms of estate planning documents (wills, Powers of Attorney, Medical Power of Attorney, etc.)<sup>6</sup>
- ◇ Knowing their rights<sup>6</sup>



### Reporting in Texas

In Texas, individuals 18 years or older is a mandatory reporter. Therefore, adults are required to report any signs of abuse of a child, an elderly person, or a person with disabilities. To report suspected elder abuse to Adult Protective Services, call 1-800-252-5400 or fill out the online report form at <https://www.txabusehotline.org/>. Both resources are available 24/7.

### Additional Resources

- ◇ ElderCare Locator (1-800-677-1116)  
<https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>
- ◇ National Center on Elder Abuse (1-855-500-3537)  
<https://ncea.acl.gov/>
- ◇ National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233)  
<https://www.thehotline.org/>
- ◇ Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (1-800-252-2412)  
[https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/news\\_info/ombudsman/](https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/news_info/ombudsman/)

### References

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## Resources

- Texas Abuse Hotline (suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 years or older) <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/>  
1-800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA)- Harris County 832-393-4301
- The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) 512-438-3011

