

## Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is any knowing, intended, or careless act that causes harm or serious risk of harm to an elderly person. An elderly adult is defined as someone 60 years old or older. The harm caused can be physical, sexual, emotional, or financial in nature.

## Types of Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a broad term and can mean physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

Types of elder abuse include:

- **Physical abuse** - the intentional use of physical force that results in bodily injury, physical pain, illness, distress, or death (hitting, biting, beating, scratching, shaking, kicking, shoving, pinching, burning, etc.)
- **Sexual abuse** - forced or unwanted sexual interaction of any kind with an older adult, which can be acts of touching or not-touching. It is also sexual abuse if these acts are committed against someone who is not competent to give informed consent.
- **Emotional or physiological abuse** - verbal and nonverbal acts that results in mental pain, fear, grief or distress (humiliation, threatening, isolation from family, controlling resources such as access to transportation or phone.)
- **Neglect** - failure by a caregiver to protect an older person from harm, or failing to meet needs for basic care, which results in a serious risk of compromised health and safety (inadequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, healthcare, etc.)
- **Financial abuse or exploitation** - the illegal, unauthorized, or improper use of an older person's resources by a caregiver for the benefit of someone other than the elder (forgery, misuse or theft of money or possessions, using deception to surrender finances or property, or improper use of guardianship or power of attorney.)

## Protective Factors & How You Can Help

Protective factors can be put in place to help reduce the risk for elder abuse, whether the individual lives at an assisted care facility, their own home, or with family. Make sure you and your elderly loved ones have a strong network of relationships with family, friends and community members. If they are living in assisted living, a nursing home or other community setting, make sure they have effective monitoring systems that prevent abuse. They should also be able to provide you with their policies and procedures regarding elderly patient care.

Elderly loved ones may be too ashamed to report mistreatment or they may be afraid that their report could get back to the abuser and worsen the situation. If you suspect your elderly loved one is being abused or neglected, call the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Adult Protective Services Division at 1.800.752.6200.

Source –Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/elderabuse/index.html>

