



Attorney General's Office of Victim Services

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Vulnerable Adult/Elder Abuse

It can be very difficult to recognize, accept and take action regarding abuse when it is happening to you or a loved one. The suspected abuse may be taking place in a licensed care facility or by a family member or friend. You or your loved one may not be able to reach out to anyone with the details of what is taking place, which may be because of physical or mental impairments, embarrassment, or shame. Regardless, the abuser is counting on your or your loved one's infirmity, reluctance to disclose the abuse, or fear of the abuser's retaliation, to keep the abuse a secret.

There are four types of Vulnerable Adult/Elder Abuse:

- *Psychological abuse* is a pattern of ridiculing or demeaning, making derogatory remarks, verbally harassing or threatening.
- *Physical abuse* refers to the intentional infliction of any bodily harm or injury, or physical conditions that endanger the individual's health or welfare.
- *Financial exploitation* includes the misappropriation of finances or the theft of money, property, or possessions, which includes "conning" and extortion.
- *Neglect* is a pattern of conduct in which a person fails to provide at least minimal care for another person in their care. Neglect differs from abuse in that it is a failure to take action rather than taking action against an older person.

Facts about Abuse

Understanding some reasons why abuse takes place may help you to understand your or your loved one's victimization.

- Approximately 1 in 10 Americans over 60 years of age have been victimized in some way. Only 1 in 14 cases are reported.¹
- Almost 60% of elder abuse perpetrators are family members.¹
- Social isolation and mental impairment are some factors that make elder adults vulnerable to mistreatment.¹
- Elder Financial Abuse costs victims approximately \$36.5 billion per year.¹
- Elder Mistreatment most commonly occurs in the home or facility where the elder adult is living.²
- Most victims are dependent on their abuser for basic needs.²

Signs of Abuse

There are signs that may be indicative of abuse. This is not a comprehensive list, and you or your loved one may have experienced different types of mistreatment; however, these are some common signs of abuse.

- Bruises, welts, bed sores, fractured/broken bones, cuts, etc.
- Signs of physical restraint
- Withdrawal from normal activities, strained relationships, arguments between the elder and the caregiver, depression, etc.
- Sudden changes in financial situations
- Unattended medical needs, poor hygiene/dental hygiene, unusual weight loss
- Soiled clothing or bedding
- Lack of necessities (food, water, medications, bathroom assistance)

Secondary Abuse

Though you may not be the direct victim of abuse, you may find yourself deeply affected by what has happened to your loved one. You may find yourself avoiding the problem. Once you are certain some type of mistreatment is taking place, you may feel different emotions, like anger, depression, etc. Keep in mind that the victim, your loved one, is likely feeling the same things, perhaps even more intensely. These feelings should resolve in time for both of you; however, if you or the victim find yourselves unable to move beyond the intense emotions you feel, it would be a good idea to take advantage of some of the resources listed later in this document to help.

What You Can Do

If you or your loved one may be a victim of any type of Elder Mistreatment, you can start by reporting your suspicions to Arizona Adult Protective Services (AAPS). AAPS investigates situations involving allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation of incapacitated or vulnerable adults who are unable, by their own resourcefulness, to protect their person, rights, welfare, and/or interests.

¹ <https://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/elder-justice/elder-abuse-facts/>

² <https://www.dosomething.org/facts/11-facts-about-elder-abuse>

Describe for them any/all attempts you or your loved one has made to intervene (reporting to the facility's administrator, etc.) and the outcomes. If necessary, submit your report in writing.

What We Can Do

If your case is being investigated or prosecuted by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, the Office of Victim Services (OVS) may assist you or your loved one in several ways to cope with the emotional ramifications of victimization, the complexities of criminal investigations, as well as the criminal justice system.

Your concerns may lead to an investigation by the Attorney General's Office or another law enforcement agency. An OVS advocate will be assigned to your case to guide you through the investigative process, as well as keep you apprised of the case status.

If your concerns result in a criminal prosecution after investigation, you may find that the prosecution process is a new and intimidating environment. To assist you and your loved one, OVS advocates will keep you updated, in writing or by phone, about the status of the case. You or your loved one will be informed of scheduled court proceedings, the outcome of those hearings, and your rights in the judicial process.

Some victims find it helpful to be actively involved as their cases are being investigated or prosecuted. Case updates and notifications from the Office of Victim Services, as well as the advocates themselves, can enable you and your loved one to participate to the extent you desire.

Victim Compensation

If you decide to seek professional help to cope with emotional problems resulting from the crime, or you are in need of help with other eligible expenses resulting from the victimization (medical care, emergency relocation, etc.), the OVS advocate may refer you to the Victim Compensation Program and help you with applying for compensation monies. For more information about Victim Compensation, you may contact your advocate or visit <http://azcjc.gov/ACJC.Web/victim/VictComp.aspx>.

Resources to Help You

Taskforce Against Senior Abuse (TASA)

Elder Helpline
602-542-2124 (Phoenix)
602-542-7918 (Spanish)
1-800-352-8432 (Toll Free)
SeniorAbuse@azag.gov

Area Agency on Aging (Pima County)

8467 East Broadway
Tucson, AZ 85710
520-790-7262

Area Agency on Aging (Maricopa County)

1366 E. Thomas Rd., Suite 108
Phoenix, AZ 85014
602-264-2255

Adult Protective Services

1-877-SOS-ADULT (1-877-767-2385)
1-877-815-8390
www.azdes.gov/reportadulthoodabuse