



Elder Mistreatment

A Trauma - Informed Approach



Objectives

- Identify the following about Abuse in Later Life (AiLL):
 - Signs
 - Risk factors
- Understand the unique needs of older adults.
- Identify barriers to reporting abuse, particularly for IPV victims.
- Identify resources and opportunities for action.

What is AiLL?

Elder Abuse occurs in both community and institutional settings and takes many forms, including:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Emotional/Psychological abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Neglect**
- **Financial exploitation**

Elder Abuse is believed to be widely under-detected and under-reported.

Types of Abuse

Multiple forms of abuse can occur at once.



PHYSICAL



PSYCHOLOGICAL



FINANCIAL



SEXUAL



NEGLECT

Signs of Abuse

It is up to all of us to know the signs of elder abuse and immediately report any suspicions of abuse occurring in the community or long-term care setting.



Physical Signs

- Broken bones, bruises, and welts
- Untreated bed sores
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Sexually transmitted diseases without clear explanations
- Dirtiness, poor nutrition, or dehydration
- Poor living conditions
- Lack of medical aids [glasses, walker, teeth, hearing aid, or medications]
- Over/under medicated

Signs of Abuse (continued)



Emotional & Behavioral Signs

- Unusual changes in behavior or sleep
- Fear or anxiety
- Isolation from friends or family
- Withdrawal from normal activities
- Sadness

Signs of Abuse (continued)



Financial Signs

- Unusual changes in a bank account or money management services
- Unusual or sudden changes in a will or other financial documents
- Fraudulent signatures on financial documents
- Unpaid bills

Risk Factors

- **Limited social support.**
- **Dementia.**
- **Experience of previous traumatic events—including IPV.**
- **Disability.**
- **Gender.**
- **Living with a large number of household members other than a spouse.**
- **Poverty.**

Ageism - Recognizing



Ageism - Understanding



Ageism - Disrupting



Ageism & AiLL

- **Ageist stereotypes serve as a barrier to recognizing abuse.**
- **Internal ageism may prevent victims from reporting abuse.**
- **Ageism can often result in lack of offender accountability.**

Unique needs of older adults

- **Elder specific trauma experiences**

- Holocaust, boarding school experiences of American Indians, Japanese American internment camps, racial segregation in the Jim Crow South, and periods where women were disenfranchised and domestic and sexual violence went largely unrecognized.

- **Dementia**

- Vulnerable due to impairments in memory, communication abilities, and judgment.

- **Polyvictimization**

- Types of elder abuse can co-occur in various combinations, frequently causing older adults to suffer in multiple and complex ways. In a nationwide poll of APS professionals, 75% of respondents said that older adults who experience multiple types of abuse comprise over 25% of their caseloads.

Unique needs of older adults

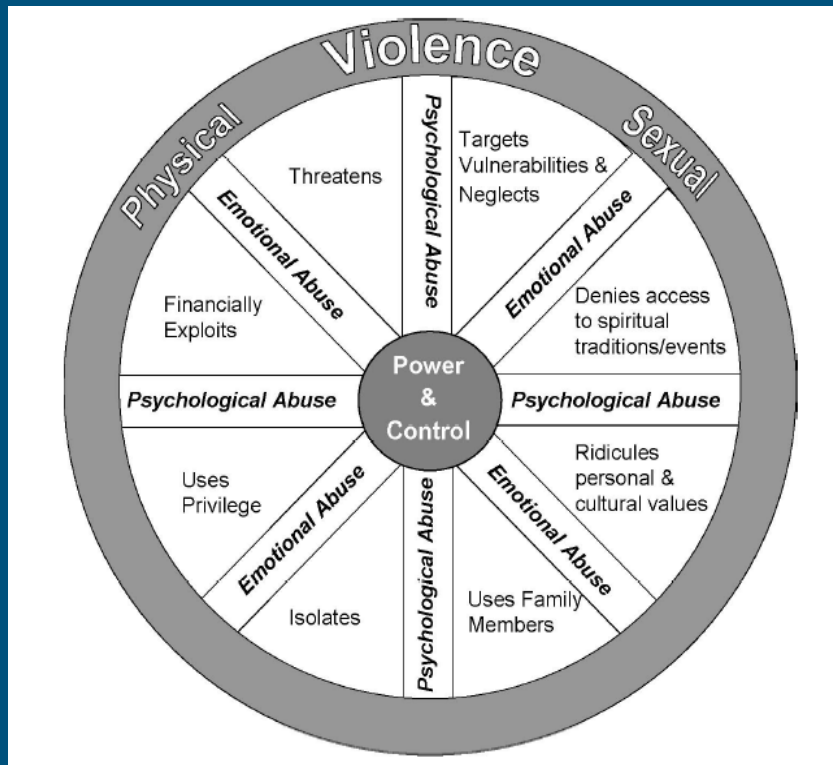
- **Cultural differences**

- In many cultures elder abuse is contrary to cultural role expectations. For example, American Indian Tribes revere the older adults in their communities; therefore elder abuse may often go unreported out of shame and guilt. In Korean and Japanese cultures, elder abuse often goes unreported due to the expectation to “keep family matters within the family.”

- **Isolation**

- Social isolation has been linked to increased mortality in older adults, dementia, an increased risk of hospital readmission, increased risk of falls and elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

DV in Later Life



1. Victim Safety Always Comes First

2. Be aware of and avoid assumptions

3. Recognize Abuser Tactics

4. Collaborate, Collaborate, Collaborate

DV in Later Life



Older IPV victims socialized differently

Many have suffered years of abuse, disempowerment high

Complex, ambivalent feelings for offender normal

Dependency upon offenders

Desire to protect offspring inhibits self-protection

DV in Later Life

Why it's so under reported...

Disbelief: elders are sexually assaulted

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graph TD; A[Disbelief: elders are sexually assaulted] --> B[Some reporting discounted as psychotic or demented]; B --> C[Forensic indicators often missed or misinterpreted on an older body]; C --> D[Response to allegations often insufficient];
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Some reporting discounted as psychotic or demented

Forensic indicators often missed or misinterpreted on an older body

Response to allegations often insufficient

AiLL

Statewide Resources

- **Adult Protective Services**
Contact Local DSS or call statewide hotline
1-888-832-3858
 - **Domestic & Sexual Violence Agency**
STATEWIDE HOTLINE
1.800.838.8238
 - **Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging (Ombudsman)**
<http://vaaaa.org/>
-

AiLL

Statewide Resource

The screenshot shows the SeniorNavigator website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the SeniorNavigator logo (a stylized figure with arms raised) and the text "SeniorNavigator A VirginiaNavigator Website". To the right of the logo are "Login" and "Register" buttons. Below the logo is a horizontal menu with categories: "Aging Well", "Caregiving", "Community", "Financial", "Housing", and "Legal". To the right of this menu is a "Our Websites" dropdown menu.

Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text "Search for local services, helpful tips, and answers - in two steps!". The search bar is divided into two sections: "1 City, County, or Zip" and "2 Popular Topics". To the right of the search bar is a "SEARCH" button.

The main content area features a large banner image of a smiling woman embracing an elderly man. The text "Providing direction for caregivers and seniors." is overlaid on the image. To the right of the banner are three smaller promotional tiles:

- "Celebrate Healthy Aging During September!" with an image of two people sitting outdoors.
- "Use Our ServiceNavigator Tool to Find Community Resources" with a red location pin icon.
- "What Social Security Scams Do You Need to Be Aware Of?" with an image of a Social Security check.

Below the banner is a section titled "I Want To..." with a list of links:

- Learn More
- Make a Donation
- Ask an Expert
- Get E-Quicktips
- Community Calendar
- Provide Feedback

To the right of the "I Want To..." section are two more promotional tiles:

- "SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" with the USDA logo and the text "Putting Healthy Food Within Reach". Below this tile is a link: "TO LEARN MORE CLICK HERE" with a right-pointing arrow.
- "VIRGINIA No Wrong Door ACCESS. OPTIONS. ANSWERS. SUPPORTING OLDER ADULTS, CAREGIVERS, INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND FAMILIES". Below this tile is a link: "CLICK TO LEARN MORE" with a right-pointing arrow.

Do something!

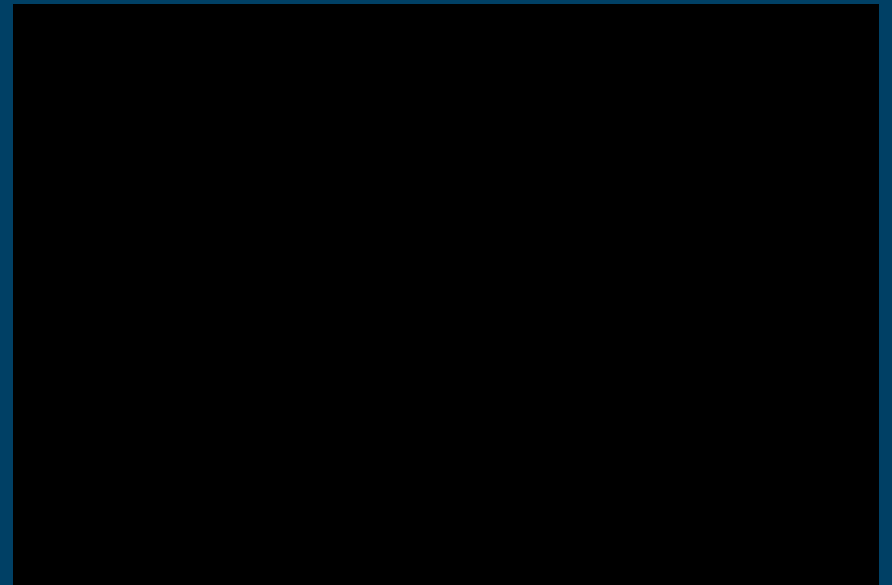
Individual Level.

- **I WILL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO PREVENT AND REPORT ELDER ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION.**
- **I WILL** never knowingly violate the trust of the elders with whom I come in contact.
- **I WILL** ensure that I know how to recognize elder abuse and exploitation and how to report it.
- **I WILL** strive to educate my family, friends and associates to know when, where and how to report suspected elder abuse and exploitation

*"I WILL" - created by MEAPA, the Maricopa Elder Abuse Prevention Alliance,
in partnership with the Arizona Association of Area Agencies on Aging*

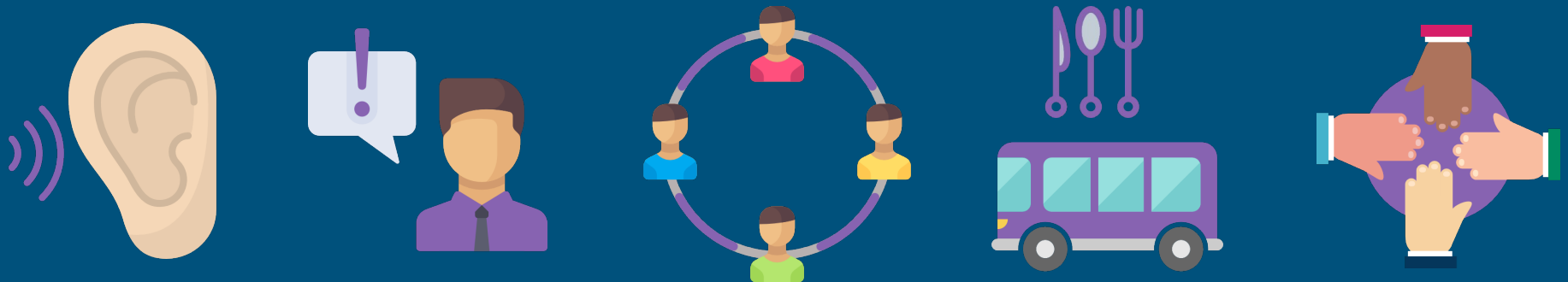
Do something!

Organizational Level.



Preventing Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is **preventable** – and everyone has a role to play. It is up to all of us to build strong supports for one another and prevent abuse before it happens.



Virginia Statewide Adult Protective Services: 1-888-832-3858

Where did you get this stuff?!?!
—

NCALL

NCEA

FACT

NCALL

National Clearinghouse on
Abuse in Later Life

Working with Older Survivors of Abuse: A Framework for Advocates



RESPECT

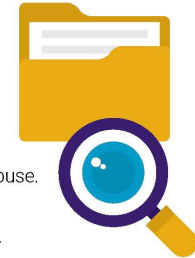
Responsive, Victim-Defined Advocacy
Elder-Informed
Services, Safety Planning, and Outreach
Policies
Equity and Access
Collaboration
Training and Awareness

NCEA

National Center on Elder Abuse

The Facts About Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is the harming of an older person. It can include neglect, physical, emotional, financial, or sexual abuse.



Here are some elder abuse facts that everyone should know.

- About 1 in 10 Americans age 60+ have experienced abuse.
- Without decent health care and public resources, our population becomes more at risk for abuse as we age.
- The impact of elder abuse is felt by people of all ages.
- Elder abuse also reduces older people's participation in the life of our communities.
- Elder abuse creates health care and legal costs that are often carried by public programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

*It is up to **all of us** to prevent and address elder abuse!*

Our country's value of justice for all requires that we construct strong supports that help people of all ages. Ending isolation and creating and improving transportation, law enforcement, senior centers, and social services can help stop abuse. **Visit ncea.acl.gov to learn more.**

To get access to local resources or more information, please visit us online or call:

**Virginia Statewide Adult Protective Services
1-888-832-3858**



This material was completed for the National Center on Elder Abuse situated at Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and is supported in part by a grant (No. 90ABRC000101-02) from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Grantees carrying out projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Therefore, points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official ACL or HHS policy.

FACT

Family & Children's Trust Fund of Virginia



TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES TO ELDER ABUSE

ISSUE BRIEF SUMMARY



As Americans live longer and healthier lives, older adults represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. The number of people in Virginia aged 65 and older will nearly double between 2010 and 2030, accounting for 1 in 5 Virginians.¹ With this demographic change, communities must strengthen their efforts to protect older adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation and understand the unique ways older adults respond to and heal from trauma.

Due to ageism, physical limitations, loss of spouse/partner, peers, family members and various other complex factors, older adults are often isolated from their communities.² It is therefore very important that professionals and volunteers who visit older adults in their homes have a basic understanding of elder abuse, neglect, and trauma.

HOW COMMON IS ELDER ABUSE?



of older adults over 60 experienced elder abuse.⁸



1 in 24 cases of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation are reported.⁹

WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

Elder abuse includes physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, as well as neglect, financial exploitation and other forms of exploitation of an older person, in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust. Elder abuse can also be defined as a targeted act of violence or deception directed towards an older adult by virtue of their age or disabilities, which may be perpetrated by individuals unknown to the adult. Elder abuse also includes self-neglect in which the adult is unable to meet their basic needs due to a physical or mental health condition.³

TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE

Abuse of older adults takes many different forms, all of which may have various warning signs. The most common forms and signs of elder abuse are defined below. Keep in mind that it is very common for an older adult to experience multiple forms of abuse at the same time.⁴

Physical abuse is the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment.⁵

Sexual abuse is non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.⁵

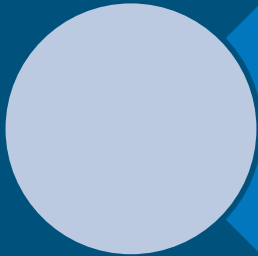
Emotional abuse is the infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or non-verbal acts. Emotional abuse is one of the most difficult problems to spot, because the older adult may be unable to communicate what is happening due to illness, dementia, or fear of being neglected. Emotional abuse can range from a simple verbal insult to an aggressive verbal attack. It can also include threats of physical harm or isolation.⁵

Financial exploitation is the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets.⁵

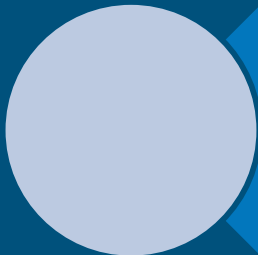
Neglect is refusal, or failure, to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an older adult. If an older adult is cognitively or physically disabled, and needs help taking medication or getting dressed, it can be considered neglect if their caregiver is not providing assistance. Additionally, passive neglect occurs when the abuse is unintentional, often as the result of an overburdened or untrained caregiver.⁵

Self-neglect involves the failure of an older adult to meet their own essential physical, psychological or social needs, which threatens their health, safety and well-being. This includes failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, and health care for one's own needs.⁶ In Virginia, self-neglect is the most commonly reported form of elder abuse.⁷

Grant Funding



This project supported in part by Grant No. 22-T4145VA21 awarded by the Department of Criminal Justice Services from funds authorized by the federal Violence Against Women Act and awarded to Virginia by the U.S. Department of Justice.



Opinions or points of view expressed do not necessarily represent those of DCJS or the Justice Department.

Questions?!?!

Ask me anything
(about these slides)...



Let's connect

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