

# Elder Abuse and Mistreatment

We need to address this silent epidemic



Elder abuse is the deliberate action(s) or negligent action(s) that induces harm to a vulnerable adult age 60 or older by an individual providing care for the adult or any individual exposed to the adult.

A recent study reports an approximate 84% increase in elder abuse since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. It has been estimated that nearly 5 million older adults are abused annually. Many cases go unreported.

The cost is high. For example, elder financial exploitation has been found to cost victims \$28.3 billion a year.

## FORMS OF ABUSE

**Sexual Abuse:** Any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.

**Physical Abuse:** Intentionally inflicting physical pain or force on an older adult.

**Neglect:** Failure to provide the older adult with their basic necessities.

**Psychological or Emotional Abuse:** The use of intimidation, verbal and/or non-verbal abuse, threats, or harassment.

**Financial Abuse:** The illegal misuse of an older adult's finances, personal property, etc. for the financial gain of someone else.

## ADDRESSING ELDER ABUSE

Reducing elder abuse requires a collective effort. Key ways to prevent and reduce elder mistreatment include:

**Support Services:** Promote increased access to support services for both potential victims, survivors, and perpetrators. Elders who experience abuse should have access to crisis helplines, counseling, and legal assistance. Increase support for organizations and initiatives that work to protect the rights and well-being of older adults.

**Training and Awareness for Professionals:** Health and human service professionals, caregivers, and those working in nursing homes or assisted living facilities should receive additional training on recognizing and preventing elder abuse.

**Community Programs:** Increase support for community programs that aim to prevent elder abuse and provide resources for elders. We are safer when we have access to programs and services that promote social connection, secure housing, food security, financial assistance, and other critical needs.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

- Mandated reporter training
- Sign up to join the Central Virginia Taskforce on Domestic Violence in Later Life
- Sign up to receive information about upcoming elder abuse and mistreatment professional training events at the Virginia Center on Aging
- Resource-rich communities are safer communities. Sign up to learn more about Virginia Helping Elders Access Resources

**APS Hotline:** 888-832-3858