



Oakland County SAVE Task Force Mission Statement

To increase awareness of elder abuse throughout Oakland County, to improve the response to incidents of elder abuse by the appropriate agencies, to develop strategies to prevent elder abuse, and to promote coordination of services for abused, neglected, and exploited vulnerable adults.

For more information about the SAVE Task force visit the Oakland County website at www.oakgov.com

Help Is Out There



Elder Abuse Awareness

How to Give and Receive Help



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

Internet Resources

State Elder Abuse Hotlines (Off Site)
www.elderabusecenter.org

If you suspect nursing home abuse, call
your Long Term Care Ombudsman:
www.ltombudsman.org

National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing
Home Reform: State Directory (Off Site)
www.nccnhr.org

NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

As our population ages, the issue of elder abuse and neglect continues to grow. It can affect people of all ethnic backgrounds and social status, and can occur in facilities as well as private homes.

Currently it is estimated that 80,000 Michigan citizens, aged 60 and older, are victims. By the year 2010 Michigan could be faced with over 100,000 cases.

The safety and protection of vulnerable adults is critical.

**If you suspect abuse or neglect
please call
Oakland County Adult
Protective Services
at
(866) 975-5010**

- The older person has the right to refuse services offered by APS. The APS agency provides service only if the senior agrees or has been declared incapacitated by the court and a guardian has been appointed. The APS agency takes such action as a last resort.

**Oakland County Adult
Protective Services (APS)
phone number:
(866) 975-5010**

**Michigan's Vulnerable Adult
Helpline
(800) 996-6228**

The Helpline is a 24 hour, 7 day per week statewide vulnerable adult abuse information and reporting service

HOW OTHERS CAN HELP

Elder Abuse is not only an issue for seniors or vulnerable adults. It is also a family and community issue.

Reporting Elder Abuse

- To report elder abuse, contact APS through your state's hotline. The APS agency screens calls for potential seriousness, and it keeps the information it receives confidential.
- If the agency decides the situation possibly violates state elder abuse laws, it assigns a caseworker to conduct an investigation (in cases of an emergency, usually within 24 hours).
- If the victim needs crisis intervention, services are available. If elder abuse is not substantiated, most APS agencies will work as necessary with other community agencies to obtain any social and health services that the older person needs.

DEFINITIONS & TYPES OF ELDER ABUSE

Elder Abuse can present itself in many forms. Most often we think of physical abuse due to the fact that it is dramatic and tangible. However, other forms can be devastating as well for a vulnerable person.

Physical Abuse

- Using physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment, which may include slapping, striking, burning and pinching

Sexual Abuse

- Any type of unwanted touching, fondling, or sexual activity, when threatened or forced without consent

Psychological Abuse

- Verbal threats, intimidation, humiliation, harassment, name-calling or insults, forced isolation from friends or family and playing mind games

Neglect

- Allowing self neglect, refusing to care for an elderly person who is unable to care for him/herself (withholding food, medicine, shelter, hygiene, physical assistance, etc.), or complete abandonment

Financial Exploitation

- Illegal or improper use of funds, property or assets: deceptive schemes the improper use of conservatorship, guardianship or power of attorney

Facts About Elder Abuse

- 75% of all victims are female
- 80% of all victims have incomes under \$10,000 per year
- The average age of abused seniors is 75
- The family is the single greatest source of elder abuse

Information taken from, "Elder Abuse & Neglect A Growing Problem" published by the Gerontology Network of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

- If you are solicited for donations, ask a trusted individual before giving away your money

B. Recognition

- Be nosy – know your neighbors and stay in communication so if there is something awry you will be aware.
- Stay involved with your family member, visit several times a week. Cover-ups are more difficult to hide when visits are frequent instead of once a week.
- Watch for signs of declining personal care, i.e. body odors, unkempt hair, dirty nails, soiled and stained clothing.
- Watch for signs of depression: sad mood, loss of interest in daily activities, irritability, forgetfulness, not dressing daily.
- Watch for vision changes and changes in behavior, i.e. inappropriate behavior, mood swings, increased isolation, etc.
- Make sure that they are receiving regular check-ups.

PREVENTION FOR SELF-NEGLECT RECOMMENDATIONS TO FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

This section speaks to preserving your rights or the rights of a loved one. We are all aware that prevention is the best cure. By following these suggestions you can protect yourself or a loved one from potential abuse.

A. Prevention

- Get things in order, i.e. finances, powers of attorney, wills, tell everyone your wishes.
- Educate yourself to available options.
- Have at least one person you can trust with whom you can share your information and complete a personal inventory.
- Remain involved in outside activities, i.e. senior center, church, service groups, volunteer.
- Exercise your mind, do activities that engage your mind.

COMMON MYTHS AND WHY THEY ARE WRONG

There are many attitudes toward older adults that contribute to their victimization by family, friends and people in positions of trust. Negative attitudes can be expressed in myths about aging and family violence.

Communities have to challenge the myths related to abuse and neglect in order to change how the issue is perceived. Some common myths are described below.

MYTH #1

“Older victims are somehow responsible for their abuse or neglect.”

No one ever deserves to be abused or neglected. Responsibility for abuse or neglect rests solely with the abuser. Placing too much emphasis on “caregiver stress” as a contributing factor tends to “forgive” the abuser and can promote victim blaming. While reducing caregiver stress may help prevent some abuse, no amount of stress excuses abuse and neglect. More attention

needs to be paid to the characteristics of abusers rather than the victims.

MYTH #2

“Older people are “burdens” or inconveniences to their families.”

Although many older people depend on their families for certain kinds of support, in many cases the relationship is one mutual assistance between generations. For example, a daughter may pick up groceries for her parents but she may regularly eat supper at their home. In many families, there is a mutual dependency which does not lead to abuse or neglect. In fact, abuse is more common when the abuser is dependent on the victim in some way.

MYTH #3

“Abuse of women stops as couples age”

Until recently there has been little awareness that women abuse continues as couples age. A reason may be that the limited resources made available have been spent on services such as shelters for the victims of family violence. Many of these services have been developed to accommodate the

to live and takes care of his money. John's son is often gone for days at a time, and John is left alone with no food in the house, no telephone, and he never knows when his son will return.

Physical Abuse

- Jack agreed to take care of his father Joe when he returned home from the hospital. Jack was very impatient and when he wouldn't eat fast enough he took away Joe's food. If his father dropped things or made a mess, Jack would kick or push him to the floor. Joe often was seen by other family members with bruises but Jack insisted his father trips and falls in the house.

spoiled and moldy food.

Neglect

- Carol has dementia and lives with her son, Paul. Paul leaves for work and locks his mother in her bedroom until he gets home. Carol is often left locked in without adequate food, and she does not have access to a bathroom. She is forced to wear Depends. She is left with a TV for companionship.

Self Neglect

- Mary has severe arthritis, vision problems, and she doesn't drive. She has shut off notices due to unpaid bills. She has laundry piled up all over and her clothing is dirty. Mary is afraid to go to the basement to wash clothes because it is too difficult to walk down the steps.

Caregiver Neglect

- John moved in with his son because his son insisted that he was not able to care for himself. John's son gave him a place

needs of younger women and children. As well, older women often remain silent about the abuse, out of shame and fear.

MYTH #4

“Older men are not abused by their spouses and children.”

Men also experience abuse. They may have a more difficult time disclosing family violence because of a common belief that men are not abused and by their own belief that being a victim is shameful and shows they aren't “real” men. Abuse affects both women and men.

MYTH #5

“Certain cultural communities are immune to abuse and neglect”

People of all cultural heritages, races and religions encounter the problem of abuse and neglect of older adults. Several stereotypes of cultures and family violence exist. For example many people believe that if a culture in general shows respect for its older members, abuse and neglect do not occur within that community. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

ABUSE & NEGLECT WARNING SIGNS OR INDICATORS

Elder abuse is a complex dilemma. In order to help you assess a potential problem here are some indicators to look for:

1. Self Neglect

- Elder is unable to understand the consequences of his/her actions which may lead to self harm or endangerment
- Inability to manage personal finances, including failure to pay bills or squandering assets
- Inability to manage activities of daily living, including personal care, shopping, meal preparation and housework
- Suicide attempts
- Refusal of medical attention
- Isolation
- Substance abuse
- Inability to access bathroom facilities
- Animal infested living quarters resulting in an unsafe situation
- Rashes, sores, malnourishment, dehy-

SCENARIOS

Sometimes specific examples can help define problem situations. The following are some real life examples of abuse:

Financial Exploitation

- Ann is frail and depends on her daughter Mary to buy groceries and pay the bills. Ann's daughter Mary has a problem with drugs and alcohol. Mary constantly visits her mother and demands money from her. Mary threatens her mother if she doesn't give her money and she pushes her around and takes money from her mother. Ann gives her daughter checks to pay the bills and Mary writes checks for herself out of her mother's account.

Self Neglect

- Sam is mentally impaired and lives on his own. He had a friend who moved out of town. Sam no longer cleans his apartment, he hasn't taken the trash out in weeks and the refrigerator is full of

- Bruises, welts, discolorations, grip marks
- Any unexplained injury that doesn't fit with the given explanation of the injury
- Any injury incompatible with the person's history of unexplained injuries
- Any injury which has not been properly cared for
- Poor skin condition or poor skin hygiene
- Dehydration and or malnourishment without illness-related cause
- Unexplained weight loss
- Soiled clothing or bed linens
- Burns, possibly caused by cigarettes, caustics, acids, or friction from ropes or chains
- Over medication

6. Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn or bloody underwear
- Bruised breasts
- Venereal diseases or vaginal infections
- Sudden changes in emotional or psychological state of the person
- Isolation

- dration, inadequate clothing
- Changes in intellectual functions, including disorientation, memory failure, incoherence
- Refusal to take medications

2. Caregiver Abuse and Neglect

- The person being cared for is not allowed to speak for himself without the presence of the caregiver
- Caregiver or family members blame the person being cared for (frequently goes with incontinence)
- Caregiver exhibits aggressive behavior, including threats, insults or harassment toward the person being cared for
- Caregiver has a previous history of abuse to others
- Caregiver has a problem with drugs or alcohol
- Caregiver exhibits inappropriate displays of affections towards the person being cared for
- Caregiver isolates family members from the person being cared for
- Caregiver is unwilling to work with other care providers on a care plan for

the person being cared for

- Leaving an elder in an unsafe or isolated place
- Rashes, sores, or lice on the elder
- Malnourishment or dehydration with sudden weight loss seen in elder
- Elder medical conditions left untreated
- Physical abuse of elder as in the use of excessive force, physical assault, or physical contact including hitting, slapping, biting pinching, shoving or the inappropriate use of restraints

3. Psychological and Emotional Abuse

- Intimidation toward an individual or denial of civil rights
- Humiliating, insulting or threatening language directed at the person
- Language or actions that treat the adult like a child
- Signs of helplessness, hesitation to talk openly, fear, withdrawal, depression, denial, agitation, anger confusion or disorientation in the person

4. Financial Exploitation

- Unusual or inappropriate activity surrounding investments or in bank ac-

counts, including the use of ATM cards used in making large or repeated withdrawals

- Signatures on checks, etc. that do not resemble the person's signature
- Signatures on documents when the person cannot write
- Power of attorney given or recent changes in or creation of a will or trust when the person is incapable of making such decisions
- Unpaid bills, overdue rent, utility shut-off notices
- Lack of spending on care of the person, including personal grooming items
- Missing personal belongings, such as art, silverware or jewelry
- Recent sale of assets and properties
- Excessive spending by a caregiver on himself for new clothing, jewelry or automobiles
- Signs of helplessness, hesitation to talk openly, fear, withdrawal, depression, denial, agitation, anger, confusion or disorientation in the person.

5. Physical Abuse

- Cuts, lacerations, punctures, wounds