

IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING ELDER ABUSE

Recognizing Elder Abuse

People above the age of 60 years are vulnerable to financial, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, as well as willful deprivation or neglect. Indian law recognizes elder abuse in the following forms: physical violence, financial manipulation, sexual abuse, and neglect. Elderly women facing physical, emotional, and financial violence can also get protection under the domestic violence law. The abuse is often caused by someone they know and care about. Recognizing some early signs of elder abuse can help prevent the abuse from continuing.



Physical abuse: violent acts that result in illness, discomfort, injury, pain, or even death.

*Look out for signs such as bruises on the face, arms, back or chest; broken bones, scrapes, and burns; broken eyeglasses; a caregiver who is refusing to allow you to see the elder alone.**



Sexual abuse: forced or unwanted sexual interaction. This may include forced contact, or may not include contact such as forcing them to look at pornographic material.

*Look out for signs such as unexplained withdrawal from normal activities or usual routine, a sudden change in alertness, and unusual depression; bruises or pain around the breasts or genital area; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.**



Emotional abuse: behavior that results in fear or distress.

Look out for signs such as a caregiver who is threatening the older person, or calling them



*names, abusing or isolating them. Watch out for controlling caregiver behavior, frequent arguments between the caregiver and elderly person.**

Neglect: failure to provide food, shelter, health care, or protection for an older person.

*Look out for signs such as bedsores, poor hygiene or unsanitary living conditions, unusual weight loss. Check to see if their medical needs are being met, or if they have enough food in the house, or if they are being left alone for long durations.**



Financial Abuse: the illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a senior for someone else's benefit

*Look out for signs such as sudden changes in their financial situation - are they selling property or cancelling services? Are valuables missing? Look out for financial activity that the older person couldn't have undertaken, such as an ATM withdrawal.**

Please be mindful of the fact that each person's experience might be different, a person may face multiple forms of abuse and display a range of warning signs. It is possible that signs and symptoms of elder abuse overlap with symptoms of mental deterioration or illness. Elder abuse often goes unreported because people are scared that they won't be believed.

Speaking With the Elderly Person

1. If you suspect abuse, provide a comfortable environment for effective communication.
2. Talk in a private space, and ask the older adult which time of day is best to meet. (Some daily medications can cause drowsiness or confusion.)
3. Ask open-ended questions and speak slowly using short sentences. Ask about one thing at a time. More than one question can be confusing. Wait patiently and listen.
4. Give the person time to answer. Understand that individuals with memory problems can tell you what happened—especially if an incident made an emotional impact. Believe their story, unless you have evidence to the contrary

Preventing elder abuse

If you're a concerned relative, you can do the following things to help

Recognize it! - "Can I help?" (Recognize the warning signs of abuse)



1. Believe older adults who tell you they are being abused or hurt.
2. Call and visit as often as you can, help them see you as a trusted confidante.
3. Watch for financial abuse by helping them check their bank accounts and credit card statements for any unauthorized transactions.
4. Offer to stay with them so the caregiver can have a break.
5. Help them monitor their medication.

Name it! - "That looks/sounds like abuse." (Talk to the older adult)



1. Overcome your hesitation to help.
2. Talk to them, without the abuser present, about what you have seen or heard.
3. Use non-judgmental language.

Address it! - "What can I do to help?" (Ask questions, check for danger, report abuse)



1. Make sure they have emergency contacts they can call.
2. Make sure they have access to the medical services they need.
3. Ask questions - are you ok? Do you feel safe? Is there anything I can do to help? Even if they refuse your help, keep checking in with them.
4. If you have immediate concerns about safety, call the police

Reporting elder abuse

Call the police or 1-0-0 immediately if someone you know is in immediate, life-threatening danger. Talk to the older person before reporting abuse. Do they want to report it? Try to get their consent if possible.

Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse: Please go to the nearest police station and ask to file a Zero FIR (First Information Report). This will allow you to file the complaint in any police station. Let them know the nature of the abuse. The applicable legislation is the Indian Penal Code. For specific provisions click here.

Neglect and Abandonment: The law also protects older persons from neglect, and abandonment. An older person, or anyone on their behalf can file an application with the help of a lawyer under S.4 of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 asking that their children or legal heirs provide them with food, clothing, shelter, and medical treatment.

Emotional Abuse: Older women can file a protection order against emotional abuse under the Domestic Violence Act with the help of a lawyer. The abuser can be any member of their household.

Financial Abuse: If you suspect financial abuse, you can help the elder track their pension benefits through "bhavishya.nic.in". You could also help them track their expenses and credit card payments. You can report financial abuse by talking to their bank and helping them cancel cards. Report the theft to the police by filing a Zero FIR.

You can also contact organisations to help you find legal assistance:

- Help Age India: 1800-180-1253
- Dignity Foundation:
 - Mumbai: 022 6138 1111
 - Chennai: 044 2621 0363
 - Kolkata: 033 2418 7937 / 4602 0978
 - Bengaluru: 080 2654 2229
 - Pune: 020 2685 1221
 - Delhi: +91 8448317316