

# Elder Abuse & Neglect

Your Job as a Caregiver with Primary Home Care is watch for potential situations and then as soon as safely able, to report any concerns to your direct supervisor, the Scheduling Department.



## Elder Abuse & Neglect

- Many elderly adults are abused in their own homes or even in relatives' homes. If you suspect that an elderly person is at risk it's important to speak up. Learn about the warning signs of elder abuse, what the risk factors are, and how you can prevent and report the problem.

## What is elder abuse?

- As elders become more physically frail, they're less able to stand up to bullying and or fight back if attacked. They may not see or hear as well or think as clearly as they used to, leaving openings for unscrupulous people to take advantage of them. Mental or physical ailments may make them more trying companions for the people who live with them.
- In the U.S. alone, more than half a million reports of abuse against elderly Americans reach authorities every year, and millions more cases go unreported.



## Where does elder abuse take place?

- Elder abuse tends to take place where the senior lives: most often in the home where abusers are often adult children, other family members such as grandchildren, or spouses/partners of elders.
- The different types of elder abuse
- Abuse of elders takes many different forms, some involving intimidation or threats against the elderly, some involving neglect, and others involving finances. The most common are defined below.

## Physical abuse

- Physical elder abuse is non-accidental use of force against an elderly person that results in physical pain, injury, or impairment. Such abuse includes not only physical assaults such as hitting or shoving but the inappropriate use of drugs, restraints, or confinement.

## Emotional abuse

- In emotional or psychological abuse, people speak to or treat elderly persons in ways that cause emotional pain or distress.
- Verbal forms of emotional elder abuse include
- Intimidation through yelling or threats
- Humiliation and ridicule
- Habitual blaming or scapegoating
- Nonverbal psychological elder abuse can take the form of
- Ignoring the elderly person
- Isolating an elder from friends or activities
- Terrorizing or menacing the elderly person



## **Sexual abuse**

- Sexual elder abuse is contact with an elderly person without the elder's consent.

## **Neglect or abandonment by caregivers**

- Elder neglect, failure to fulfill a caretaking obligation, constitutes more than half of all reported cases of elder abuse. It can be intentional or unintentional.

## **Financial exploitation**

- This involves unauthorized use of an elderly person's funds or property.
- Misuse an elder's personal checks, credit cards, or accounts
- Steal cash, income checks, or household goods
- Forge the elder's signature
- Engage in identity theft
- Announcements of a "prize" that the elderly person has won but must pay money to claim
- Phony charities
- Investment fraud



## Healthcare fraud and abuse

- Examples of healthcare fraud and abuse regarding elders include
- Not providing healthcare, but charging for it
- Overcharging or double-billing for medical care or services
- Getting kickbacks for referrals to other providers or for prescribing certain drugs
- Overmedicating or undermedicating
- Recommending fraudulent remedies for illnesses or other medical conditions
- Medicaid fraud



## Signs and symptoms of elder abuse

- At first, you might not recognize or take seriously signs of elder abuse. They may appear to be symptoms of dementia or signs of the elderly person's frailty — or caregivers may explain them to you that way. In fact, many of the signs and symptoms of elder abuse do overlap with symptoms of mental deterioration, but that doesn't mean you should dismiss them on the caregiver's say-so.

## General signs of abuse

- If you suspect elderly abuse, but aren't sure, look for **clusters** of the following physical and behavioral signs.

## Physical abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on two side of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (a prescription has more remaining than it should)
- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists



## Emotional abuse

In addition to the general signs above, indications of emotional elder abuse include:

- Threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver behavior that you witness
- Behavior from the elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling to oneself

## Sexual abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding



## **Neglect by caregivers or self-neglect**

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores
- Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, other fire hazards)

## **Financial exploitation**

- Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition
- Items or cash missing from the senior's household

## **Healthcare fraud and abuse**

- Evidence of overmedication or undermedication



# Elder Abuse & Neglect



On-going Education for  
Caregivers



Required  
for all  
employees