



What You Should Know About the Abuse of Elderly or Disabled Adults

A Project of the Colorado Non-Profit Development Center

Who are the Victims?

In Colorado, more than 4,000 incidents of adult abuse, exploitation or neglect are reported each year to local county departments of social services and long-term care ombudsmen. Many more go unreported.

The victims are at-risk adults age 18 or over who due to age or disability are unable to protect themselves and have no one to protect them.

Over 70% are over 60 and are physically impaired or have some form of dementia.

The younger victims are persons with physical or developmental disabilities.

For many, the abuse, exploitation or neglect is caused by a caregiver or a member of their own family.

Often the victim is totally dependent upon the abuser, and is afraid to complain for fear of reprisal.

Where to Call:

If you are an elderly or disabled adult who is abused, exploited or neglected, or if you know someone who is:

- Call the police or sheriff, or;
- Call the adult protection services unit of your local county department of social services to request an investigation.

Remember that victims are often unable to ask for help, due to fear or disability. You do not need the victim's consent to make this report.

Under Colorado law, you are protected from liability if you make the report in good faith. You may make an anonymous report.

***For further information call:
1-800-773-1366 or 303-866-3433***

The following are signs that may indicate abuse, exploitation or neglect are occurring:

Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, burns, broken bones, especially when the explanation for the cause of the injury does not seem plausible
- Over medication/sedation
- Multiple bruises in various stages of healing, particularly bruises on inner arms or thighs
- Victim appears frightened or withdrawn.
- Victim has been locked in a room or tied up

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

- Sudden dramatic change in victim's behavior: appears withdrawn, depressed
- Caretaker won't let victim speak for him/herself
- Caretaker scolds, insults and/or threatens victims

Sexual Abuse

- Evidence of sexually transmitted disease
- Irritation or injuries to mouth, genitals or anus
- Victim acts upset when changed or bathed
- Victim appears fearful when with a particular person

Neglect

- Filthy living environment
- Lack of medical attention
- Lack of dentures, hearing aids, glasses
- Malnutrition, dehydration
- Clothing is inadequate for the climate
- Poor hygiene

Financial Exploitation

- Unusual activity in bank account; sudden large withdrawals; expenditures that are not consistent with victim's past financial history
- Use of Automated Teller Machines by person who with no history of using ATMs or who cannot access one due to a disability
- Signing over rights on legal papers without understanding what the papers mean
- Eviction for nonpayment of rent; house in foreclosure; utilities shut off, lack of food, clothing or personal supplies
- Title to home signed over in exchange for promise of "life-long care"

Fight Back Against Scams!

- Consumer rip-offs can be the basis for theft cases. If the victim is an at-risk adult, special penalties apply.
- Home-improvement rip-offs, car repairs not done, telemarketing or door-to-door sales, hearing aids, misrepresentations and fraudulent charitable solicitations – all should be reported to your local district attorney. You will be treated with courtesy and empathy.