



# An Introduction to Elder Abuse

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# Understanding Elder Abuse

# Elder Abuse: Under the Radar

**For every one case of  
elder abuse that comes  
to the attention of a  
responsible entity. . .**

**1**

**Another twenty three  
cases never come to  
light.**

**23**

- Source: NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study; Weill Cornell Medical College, NYC Department for the Aging; Lifespan; (2011) Slide courtesy of Life Long Justice

# Elder Abuse

- Physical, sexual or psychological abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment and financial exploitation of an older person by another person or entity,
- That occurs in any setting (e.g., home, community or facility),
- Either
  - In a relationship where there is an expectation of trust; and/or
  - When an older person is targeted based on age or disability.

Cite: DOJ/HSS Elder Justice Roadmap Project



***Multiple forms  
of elder abuse often  
occur at the same time***



## Older Victims

- Diverse: All races, religions, ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic groups
- Gender: Female and male
- Social status: Often socially isolated

# Older Victims(Cont.)

- **Health status:** Range from active and healthy to needing 24-hour care
- **Living Arrangements:** in private homes, congregate living arrangements, and facilities, etc.
- **Cognitive status:** Some victims have some cognitive and memory impairment

# Abusers

**Most older victims are abused by someone they know and trust or would expect to trust.**

- Family members
- Spouses or partners
- Caregivers (family, paid staff or volunteers)
- Persons in positions of trust/authority

**Some target older adults for their age and perceived or real frailty**

- Strangers



## Victims Living in Facilities are Abused By:

- Caregivers and other facility staff and volunteers
- Other residents
- Spouses and partners
- Family members
- Strangers

# Effects of Elder Abuse on Victims

- **Mortality:** Rates than non-abused older people, up to 300% higher (Lachs, et al, 1998; National Academies, 2010)
- **Distress:** Significantly higher levels of psychological distress and lower perceived self-efficacy than other older adults (Comijs, et al, 1999; Dong 2005)
- **Health:** Bone or joint problems, digestive problems, depression or anxiety, chronic pain, high blood pressure, and heart problems (Dyer, et al, 2000; Stein & Barret-Connor, 2000)

# What You Can Do

- **Recognize the Signs of Elder Abuse**
- **Ask**
- **Report or Refer**

# What You Can Do(Cont.)

- Listen to older adults and others who may tell you about suspicions of abuse
- Do not discount an older adult's claim simply because of a cognitive impairment
- Look for elder abuse indicators and behavior changes
- Ask questions even if you do not suspect abuse to encourage disclosures

# Report - Refer

## REPORT

- 911 or law enforcement (life threatening or possible crime)
- Adult Protective Services
- Licensing board (if abuse occurs in a facility)

## REFER

- Domestic violence or sexual assault organization
- Aging network agency
- Ombudsman (if abuse is in a facility)

# HB 78

## HIGHLIGHTS OF HOUSE BILL 78

- 1 – Crimes against elder and disabled adults have been moved from Title 30 over to Title 16, so they are easier for law enforcement/prosecutors to find.
- 2 - Expanded protection and penalties. The abuse, neglect and exploitation crime covers all vulnerable adults, not just those who live outside of facilities. Sexual abuse is covered for the first time. And the penalty for abuse, neglect and exploitation has risen from five years to twenty years.
- 3 – There is an expanded list of mandated reporters, including dentists, interns, marriage counselors, teachers and paramedics.
- 4 – Depositions are available in criminal cases for material witnesses who are over the age of 72, regardless of their current health status. This will help preserve testimony for trial.
- 5 – Owners/operators/managers of nursing facilities can be prosecuted for abuse, neglect or exploitation if they are accomplices or co-conspirators to the crime.

# HB 1037

## Abuser Registry in Georgia

- Passage of HB 1037 was widely supported in the legislature
- Expands the current CNA Registry maintained by the Department of Community Health
- Creation of an Abuser Registry
- [Abuser Registry Video](#)



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**



**For additional resources, visit [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov)**



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