

Butler County Area Agency on Aging

**Protective Services (724) 283-6955
Answers 24 hours a day ~ 7 days a week**

Sunnyview Home Complex
111 Sunnyview Circle, Building 3 - Suite 101
Butler, PA 16001-3547
Phone (724) 282-3008 Toll Free 1-888-367-2434



Elder abuse happens more often than one might imagine. It's a problem that is very serious and often hidden. It largely goes unreported because many victims are ashamed or unable to report the abuse, or they fear retaliation if they do speak up. Sadly, the victim often lives with family members and depends on them for care. The home should be a place of comfort and refuge, not a place of punishment or fear.

Elder abuse is a national disgrace that you can help to end. Reporting in Pennsylvania is [voluntary and can be anonymous](#). Whether you are positive or unsure about a situation - it's best to contact an authority, such as the Butler County Area Agency on Aging. Since you may be unsure what constitutes abuse, please read the information provided below; you may be surprised.

Family members and close friends are not the only ones in a position to recognize when an older person is at risk of neglect or abuse. You may notice that an elderly neighbor never goes outside or has visitors. Dementia may be blamed on "old age" when the real cause is malnutrition or drug misuse. A bank teller may notice an elderly person withdrawing large sums of money from a savings account without apparent reason. Prevention and intervention are important ways to stop the cycle of elder abuse. You can make a difference.

Elder Abuse Defined

1. Physical

- ❑ **Injury or pain, unreasonable confinement, withholding of food or care**
- ❑ **Emotional – verbal abuse or intimidation, isolation or use of threats**
- ❑ **Sexual – rape or sexual harassment**

The family may have a history of displaying violent or excessive anger. In addition, personal problems and the stress involved taking care of an elderly person can be overwhelming to many people. Add these stressors to financial difficulties and the caregiver's own health issues, and the scene is set for low tolerance and little patience. In addition, the family member may not take care of him/her self properly, and therefore, may be unwilling or unable to care for their elderly relative.

2. Neglect

- ❑ **Self-neglect – failure to provide for oneself, causing a physical threat to one's health**
- ❑ **Caregiver neglect – failure to provide care and services which causes a serious threat to physical or mental health**

To make it clear, neglect can include failure to provide medicine, food or even personal care - such as help to the bathroom. Neglect may include living in a home that is poorly heated or cooled. Self-neglect may include living in unsanitary conditions, having poor hygiene or being malnourished or dehydrated from not eating properly. Over and under medicating can cause confusion, depression, anxiety or even death.

3. Exploitation

- ❑ **Taking away someone's financial resources by threat, deceit or force**

Abusers may steal or mismanage money, property, savings or credit cards of the elderly. Older people may be coerced (or forced) into signing a will or turning over assets. Children, grandchildren and caregivers may take advantage of the older person's caring attitude by asking to borrow money on a regular basis, which can lessen or eliminate funds needed to pay for the essentials.

4. Abandonment

- **Desertion of an older adult by a caretaker**

Victims may be unfairly confined or even forced out of their home. They may be intentionally isolated or denied companionship.

If you suspect maltreatment of an older person, you should report it to your local Area Agency on Aging. Even if you are not positive abuse has actually occurred you should still call.

The 24 Hour Helpline number is (724) 283-6955.

For emergencies, dial 911.

PENNSYLVANIA LAW MAKES DISTINCTIONS ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF HARM: ABUSE, NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION OR ABANDONMENT. THE NUMBERED ITEMS ABOVE LISTED IN BOLD ARE UNDERWRITTEN BY THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING.