

Learn how to spot signs of elder abuse

By

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Each year, hundreds of thousands of older persons in San Diego are abused, neglected and exploited.

Likely victims are older, frail and vulnerable seniors who depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Abusers of older adults are both women and men, and may be family members, friends or “trusted others.”

In general, elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult.

The following are forms of elder abuse:

Physical abuse: Inflicting physical pain or injury on a senior, such as slapping, bruising or restraining by physical or chemical means.

Sexual abuse: Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.

Neglect: The failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.

Exploitation: The illegal taking, misuse or concealment of funds, property or assets of a senior for someone else’s benefit.

Emotional abuse: Inflicting mental pain, anguish or distress on an elderly person through verbal or nonverbal acts, such as humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

Abandonment: Desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

Self-neglect: Characterized as the failure of a person to perform essential, self-care tasks and that such failure threatens

his/her own health or safety.

The following are signs to look for:

- Bruises, pressure marks, broken bones, abrasions and burns, which may be an indication of physical abuse, neglect or mistreatment.
- Unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a sudden change in alertness and unusual depression may be indicators of emotional abuse.
- Bruises around the breasts or genital area, which can occur from sexual abuse.
- Sudden changes in financial situations may be the result of exploitation.
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene and unusual weight loss are indicators of possible neglect.
- Behavior such as belittling, threats and other uses of power and control by spouses are indicators of verbal or emotional abuse.
- Strained or tense relationships, frequent arguments between the caregiver and elderly person are also signs of abuse.

This suffering is often in silence. If you notice changes in your elder loved one’s personality or behavior, you should start to question what is going on. Report the suspected abuse immediately by calling Adult Protective Services at 800-510-2020.

Vista Gardens Memory Care Community is offering upcoming classes related to elder abuse, including one at 11 a.m. to noon Wednesday, Oct. 8, titled “What is Elder Abuse?” A second class, “Managing Difficult Behaviors in Dementia” will be from 11 a.m. to noon Wednesday, Oct. 22.

For more information on Vista Gardens Memory Care Community, or to register for these free classes, call 760-295-3900 or visit vistagardensmemorycare.com.