Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is the infliction of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial harm/exploitation on an older adult. Elder abuse can also take the form of intentional or unintentional neglect of an older adult by the caregiver or self-neglect by an older adult themselves.


- Sometimes older adults harm themselves through self-neglect (e.g., not eating, not going to the doctor for needed care), compulsive hoarding or alcohol or drug abuse. However, one of the most difficult problems family members face is achieving a balance between respecting an older adult's autonomy and intervening before self-neglect becomes dangerous.

- Older adults who show signs of dementia may become abusive as part of the disease process. The object of the abuse may be another adult. For example, a family member, professional caregivers, or other individuals with whom the person interacts can, themselves, be mistreated by the cognitively impaired adult. Regardless of whether the abusive behavior by the older adult may be explained by changes in his or her cognitive abilities or triggered by an abusive response by a caregiver, it is still unacceptable.

**CLERGY ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS**

If you suspect that an older person is being abused or neglected, you may

- Call Adult Protective Services toll-free: 1-866-55AGING (1-866-552-4464) - Press “3”

To report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an older adult or adult with a disability residing in a long-term care facility (i.e. community living arrangements, personal care homes, assisted living, intermediate care or skilled nursing homes), contact the Department of Community Health, Healthcare Facility Regulation, 1-800-878-6442 or [http://dch.georgia.gov](http://dch.georgia.gov).

- Don't let your fear of meddling in someone else's business stop you from reporting your suspicions. You could be saving someone's life.

- Do not put the older person in a more vulnerable position by confronting the abuser yourself unless you have the victim's permission and are in a position to help the victim immediately by moving him or her to a safe place.

**Resources**

American Psychological Association

Safe Sanctuaries: The Church Responds to Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of Older Adults:
By: Joy Thornburg Melton.
[https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/older-adults-in-the-church](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/older-adults-in-the-church)