

HELP!

How to recognize and report abuse

Child and elder abuse is a serious problem that affects people from all walks of life. One of the most important ways to protect victims from abuse is by making sure they get the help they need and by reporting cases to the authorities. Here's how to recognize the different types of abuse and what to do in case you know someone who is a victim. This advice is from the General Services Administration of the U.S. government (www.USA.gov).

Child Abuse

Children who are victims of physical or emotional abuse often display mental and social development problems. In most cases, the abuse comes from their own parents or caretakers. Here are some of the signs of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** A child who suffers from physical abuse might have bruises, burn marks, broken bones and scars. They are often fearful of adults or certain people.
- **Sexual abuse:** Victims of sexual abuse are forced to have sexual relations or engage in inappropriate physical contact with adults. Signs include feeling uncomfortable when changing clothes.
- **Emotional abuse:** Children who experience emotional abuse are often victims of private or public humiliation and neglect. A child might show sudden changes in behavior and act violently.
- **Neglect:** Children who are physically neglected show signs of lack of personal hygiene and bad health due to malnutrition, among other things.

If you know or suspect that a child is a victim of abuse and is in immediate danger, call 911. To report a case of child abuse, call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse can occur in the victim's home or at places such as assisted living facilities. People who abuse the elderly are usually people who know or take care of the victims. There are several types of abuse and all of them can have a profound negative impact on a person's physical and mental health.

- **Physical abuse:** As with child abuse, elders who suffer from physical abuse also might show bruises or other signs of injury on their bodies.
- **Sexual abuse:** Elders who suffer from sexual abuse might become withdrawn.
- **Emotional abuse:** This occurs when the victim is humiliated and treated with disrespect. The victim might feel useless or inferior and might suffer from depression.
- **Neglect:** Elders show signs of physical neglect when caretakers fail to help them with their personal hygiene, food, clothing, and medications.
- **Financial abuse:** Elders are often targets of financial fraud. This usually happens when people who take care of elders steal their retirement.

If you know or suspect an elder is a victim of abuse and is in immediate danger, call 911. To report a case of elder abuse, call 1-800-677-1116 or visit the National Center on Elder Abuse at www.ncea.aoa.gov.