**Social Security Column**

COMBATING ELDER ABUSE

**By <Name>**

**Social Security <Title> in <Place>**



Elder abuse is the intentional mistreatment or harming of an adult over age 60. This abuse can take many forms – physical, emotional, sexual, and financial exploitation, as well as neglect. In the United States, an estimated 1 in 10 adults over the age of 60 experience some form of abuse each year. That number is likely much higher because elder abuse is often underreported – especially in underserved communities.

Abuse victims typically show emotional and behavioral red flags, such as depression, unusual fear or anxiety, or intentional isolation. Many victims are abused by someone they know or trust. It’s important to look for unusual changes in behavior around:

* Family members.
* Staff at inpatient facilities.
* Hired or volunteer caregivers.
* People in positions of trust like doctors or financial advisors.

You can help make a difference by checking in with older loved ones. The first step to preventing abuse is to look for signs of mistreatment or physical harm, including bruises, burns, and other unexplained injuries.

There may also be signs of neglect such as:

* Hunger and poor nutrition.
* Poor appearance or hygiene.
* Lack of necessary medical aids like glasses or medications that a caretaker should be providing.

There may also be indications of financial abuse, including:

* Unpaid rent or other bills.
* Sudden changes to a will.
* Unusual changes in money management or habits.
* Large, unexplained financial transactions.
* Allowing someone new to access bank accounts.

If you suspect that a person is a victim of elder abuse, please report it. If you or someone you care about is in a life-threatening situation, call 911. If you suspect possible abuse – but see no immediate danger – contact:

* Your local Adult Protective Services at [www.napsa-now.org/help-in-your-area](https://www.napsa-now.org/help-in-your-area/).
* The National Center on Elder Abuse at 1-855-500-3537 (ELDR).

You can also find additional local resources by searching the Eldercare Locator for your community at [eldercare.acl.gov/Public/index.aspx](https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/index.aspx).

Take some time to call or visit an older adult. Ask if they are OK and listen to what they tell you. Pay attention to signs of abuse or unusual behavior. Most of all, don’t be afraid to report suspected abuse. For more information about elder abuse visit [www.ssa.gov/payee/elder\_abuse.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/payee/elder_abuse.htm).

 Please share this information with your loved ones.

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