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Recognizing and Preventing Elder Abuse

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Reflections

Recognizing and Preventing Elder Abuse

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month and sadly, older adults are not immune to the tragedy of abuse. Approximately one in ten Americans aged 60 and over have experienced some form of abuse or neglect reports the National Council on Aging. Yet research indicates that out of every 24 actual cases of abuse or neglect, only 1 is reported.

The National Center on Elder Abuse and the National Institutes on Aging define several types of abuse and neglect that affect older adults.

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE** occurs when someone causes physical harm by hitting, kicking, slapping, etc. In the case of older adults, physical abuse also includes restraining someone against their will, such as by locking him/her in a room or using restraints to hold him/her to a chair.
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** includes someone saying hurtful words, yelling, threatening, or ignoring an older adult or preventing an older adult from seeing friends or family.

(continued)

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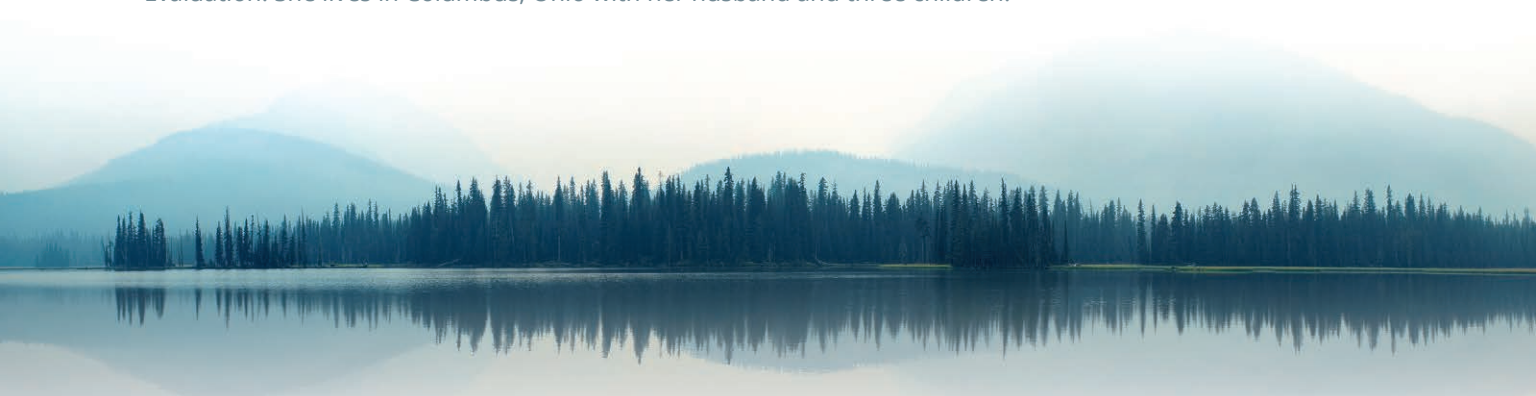
PAYROLL BULLETIN BOARD

*Checks/EFT
Released*

THIS MONTH:
October 27

NEXT MONTH:
November 26

**If you find yourself
in immediate danger,
call 911 or your local
police to get help
right away.**



- **SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs when an older person is made to watch or participate in sexual acts against their will.
- **FINANCIAL ABUSE** happens when money or possessions are stolen from an older adult. This includes forging checks, stealing retirement or Social Security benefits, or using an older person's credit cards without consent. Financial abuse also includes manipulating documents including wills, bank accounts, insurance policies, deeds, and titles without consent.
- **SPIRITUAL ABUSE** may look like preventing an older adult from going to church or taking part in religious ceremonies, or using their spiritual beliefs as an excuse to exploit or harm them.
- **NEGLECT** occurs when a caregiver (family or professional) does not provide for an older adult's physical, emotional, or social needs. It also includes withholding food, medication, or access to health care.
- **SELF-NEGLECT** happens when an older adult is no longer able to complete the activities necessary for self-care, including hygiene related activities like bathing, dressing, and cooking, or administrative activities like paying bills or taking care of a home.
- **ABANDONMENT** happens when a caregiver who has responsibility for an older adult intentionally leaves that person alone, without planning for their care.

Elder abuse can occur in a variety of environments: an older person's home, a family member's house, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home. The abuser can be a family member or friend, stranger, health care provider, or caregiver. More than 60 percent of abusers are family members—most often, children or spouses—says the National Center on Elder Abuse.

Recognizing Signs of Elder Abuse

There are many warning signs that elder abuse may be occurring. However, the National Domestic Violence Hotline cautions that the presence of one of these signs does not necessarily indicate elder abuse and could be linked to medical conditions commonly experienced during the aging process.

Common signs include:

- ▶ becoming abnormally depressed, confused, or withdrawn
- ▶ becoming isolated from family and friends
- ▶ having unexplained bruises, burns, or scars
- ▶ appearing dirty, underfed, or dehydrated
- ▶ appearing under- or over-medicated
- ▶ not receiving necessary medical care
- ▶ having bed sores or other preventable conditions
- ▶ and/or changing banking/spending patterns.

Elder abuse can have severe physical and emotional effects on older adults according to the Centers for Disease Control. Victims are often fearful and anxious; they may become distrustful of others. Serious physical injuries, such as head injuries, broken bones, constant physical pain, and soreness can have lasting physical effects. Additionally, "elders who have been abused have a 300 percent higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated."

What to Do if Abuse is Suspected

If you suspect that you or someone you know has experienced elder abuse, there is no need to continue suffering. The following resources can be helpful.

FOR SUSPECTED ABUSE

The National Adult Protective Services Association provides phone numbers for your state's Adult Protective Services office (<https://www.napsa-now.org/get-help/help-in-your-area/>).

FOR RESOURCES

You can access the Eldercare Locator weekdays at 800-677-1116. This service provides information about resources in your area.

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, board and care homes, and similar adult care homes. To learn more about ombudsman programs in your state, visit https://theconsumervoice.org/get_help

No one, regardless of age or physical/mental condition, should be subjected to violent, abusive, humiliating, or neglectful behavior. It is important to know the signs of elder abuse, as well as how to handle it, before it happens. ■