



VICTIM INDICATORS OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

If an older individual is displaying some of the signs listed below, investigate further to determine if elder abuse, neglect or exploitation is occurring. Pay particular attention to reported changes in the older individual's behavior.

Victim signs can include but are not limited to:

A. General Behavior Indicators

- Suddenly withdraws from routine activities.
- Is afraid to speak in the presence of the suspect or looks to the suspect to answer questions.
- Is confined (e.g. tied to furniture or locked in a room).
- Is isolated.
- Denies, minimizes, or blames self for what has happened, is hesitant to discuss, or gives “coded” disclosures – such as “my son has a temper.”
- Changes in behavior without explanation.
- Waits or fails to seek out help or medical treatment, misses appointments, or frequently changes doctors or hospitals.
- Visits hospital or physician with vague complaints such as anxiety, headaches, or digestive problems.
- Provides implausible or inconsistent explanations about what has occurred.
- Appears afraid, embarrassed, ashamed, withdrawn, or depressed.
- Reports being abused neglected or exploited.

B. Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Bruises, black eyes, welts, lacerations, and rope marks.
- Bone fractures, broken bones, and skull fractures.
- Open wounds, cuts, punctures, untreated injuries.
- Sprains, dislocations, and internal injuries/bleeding.

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)

A Project of Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence

307 S. Paterson St., Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3517

Phone: 608-255-0539 • Fax/TTY: 608-255-3560 • www.ncall.us • www.wcadv.org

- Broken eyeglasses/frames, physical signs of being subjected to punishment, and signs of being restrained.
- Laboratory findings of a medication overdose or under utilization of prescribed drugs.
- Injuries in various degrees of healing.
- Patterned injuries caused by an object.
- Injuries NOT in locations normally associated with accidental injuries such as: on the outside of arms, inside of legs, scalp, around throat, face, soles of feet, inside mouth, on or behind the ears, on the trunk, genitalia, and buttocks.
- Repeated, unexplained, or untreated injuries.

C. Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Infections, pain, or bleeding in genital areas.
- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Torn, stained, and/or bloody clothing, including underwear, bedding, or furnishings.
- Inappropriate (enmeshed) relationship between older adult and suspect.
- Bruises to outer arms, chest, mouth, genitals, abdomen, pelvis, or inside thighs.
- Bite marks.
- Unexplained STDs or HIV.
- Coded disclosures such as “I might be pregnant” or “He makes me do bad things.”

D. Indicators of Neglect

- Dehydration or malnutrition.
- Presence of untreated bedsores (pressure ulcers).
- Under, over, or mis-medicating an older adult. (Look for victim’s behavior or if the amount of medication available does not match the prescription.)
- Leaving an older adult in feces, urine.
- Failure to follow recommended turning procedures for older adults who are bedridden.
- Poor hygiene.
- Failure to take older adult to medical appointments, hospital.
- Unexplained changes in older adult’s weight or cognition.
- Inappropriate clothing for conditions.
- Filthy bedding, clothing.
- Dirty or unused bathroom, kitchen.

- Broken, or absence of, needed medical equipment, aids such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, walkers, wheelchairs.

E. Indicators of Financial Exploitation

- The older adult is unaware of monthly income and bills.
- Important possessions, documents or credit cards are missing.
- Many bills are unpaid.
- The caregiver refuses to spend the older adult's money on the older adult.
- The older adult has given many expensive gifts to the caregiver.
- Checks are made out to cash.
- The caregiver asks or coerces an older adult to sign a blank check and then the caregiver misuses the check or steals the money.