

What is abuse?

Abuse of older adults is an action, or lack of action, that causes harm or distress to an older adult. Abuse can come in many forms:

- Financial abuse - stealing or misusing money or property
- Physical abuse - causing physical pain or injury
- Sexual abuse - sexual contact or communication without consent
- Emotional abuse – causing mental distress, fear of violence or isolation
- Neglect - not providing basic necessities
- Violation of rights – ignoring basic rights and freedoms
- Systemic abuse – rules or policies discriminating against older adults

Elder abuse can be hard to recognize because some signs of abuse can appear to be symptoms of a person's dementia or mental decline. It is important to be aware of the signs so that the right help can be sought when needed.

Where and why does abuse occur?

Abuse usually takes place where someone lives and is about an abuser wanting to use their power or control over someone. It can be impulsive, intentional or accidental and is never the fault of the victim.

What to do if you suspect someone is being abused?

If you suspect someone is being abused, talk to them and encourage them to seek help. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.

There is an eLearning Course on this topic where the following is discussed in more detail:

- What is elder abuse?
- What are the types of abuse?
- Who abuses older adults and why?
- What are the signs of abuse?
- How is abuse reports?

References

Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA). (2017). Forms of abuse. Retrieved from <https://cnpea.ca/en/what-is-elder-abuse/forms-of-abuse>

Community Legal Education Ontario. (2019). Why does elder abuse happen? Retrieved from <https://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/elderab/why-does-elder-abuse-happen>

World Health Organization. (2018). Elder abuse. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/elder-abuse>