



ELDER ABUSE FACT SHEET

What is it?

Elder abuse refers to intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or “trusted” individual that lead to, or may lead to, harm of a vulnerable elder.

Key Facts:

- **How Many Elders Are Abused?** According to the Department of Justice, a minimum of 1 in 9 or 11% percent of Americans over age 60 have experienced some form of elder abuse in the past year.
- **Many Cases Go Unreported.** For every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect reported to authorities, at least five more go unreported.
- **Who Commits Elder Abuse?** In almost 90% of the elder abuse and neglect incidents with a known perpetrator, the perpetrator is a family member, and two-thirds of the perpetrators are adult children or spouses.
- **Financial Abuse is Common.** Elder financial abuse is regarded as the third most commonly substantiated type of elder abuse, following neglect and emotional/psychological abuse. While underreported, the annual financial loss by victims of elder financial abuse is estimated to be at least \$2.6 billion dollars.
- **Reports Increasing.** As the number of elders increases, so does the problem. Adult Protective Services (APS) found that elder abuse reports have increased by 16% comparing data from 2000 with that of 2004.
- **Death Rates Higher.** For those elders who have been mistreated, the risk of death is 300 times greater than those who have not been.

Who is at risk?

- **Women and Very Elderly Most at Risk.** Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. However, women and “older” elders are more likely to be victimized. In 2003, two out of every three (65.7%) elder abuse victims were women and in 20 of the states, more than two in five victims (42.8%) were age 80 or older.

Types of Abuse:

Physical	Financial or material exploitation	Neglect
Sexual	Abandonment	Emotional/psychological

Why is a Federal Law Needed? Older Americans have a basic right to live out their lives with dignity and respect, free from the fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

- **Scarce Resources and Fragmented Systems.** Support is desperately needed for state and community efforts and those who work on the front lines to prevent, fight and prosecute elder abuse.
- **A Need to Close the Loop.** Currently, there are federal laws governing domestic violence and child abuse, but none related to elder abuse.
- **More Education and Awareness.** Training and awareness is needed by Law enforcement, financial institutions, caregivers and family members.

The Elder Justice Act would provide increased federal resources and leadership to support state and community efforts to prevent, detect, treat, understand, intervene in and, where appropriate, prosecute elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. It also provides funding for broad-based education and awareness efforts. The bipartisan Elder Justice Act has been in the hands of Congress since 2002; the first hearings on elder abuse were 25 years ago. The National Council on Aging (NCOA), an advocacy and service organization, is currently working with WITNESS, an international human rights organization that uses video to affect change, and with the 573-member Elder Justice Coalition to urge Congress to pass the bill this year.

