
T H E M I N N E S O T A
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Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation

Abuse of seniors occurs in Minnesota today, and if left unaddressed, the problem will increase. Elder abuse and financial exploitation is currently underreported, difficult to spot and even harder to prosecute. Only by addressing this problem at a community level can we ensure that all Minnesota seniors are safe. It is most often committed by a senior's family member or caregiver.

The 5 most common types of Elder Abuse are:

- **Physical Abuse:** Use of force to threaten or physically injure an elder.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Verbal attacks, threats, rejection, isolation, or belittling acts that cause or could cause mental anguish, pain, or distress to an elder.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual contact that is forced, tricked, threatened, or otherwise coerced upon another person including anyone who is unable to grant consent.
- **Financial Exploitation:** Theft, fraud, misuse or neglect of authority, and use of "undue influence" as a lever to gain control over an older person's money or property.
- **Neglect:** A caregiver's failure or refusal to provide for a vulnerable elder's safety, physical, or emotional needs.

Abuse towards elders occurs in every community, regardless of social or economic status. The abuse is often invisible to others and sometimes, but not always, is done by people closest to the victim. Some symptoms may include unexplained injuries or bruises, excessive fear or withdrawal, sudden inability to pay bills, changes in appetite, poor personal hygiene, no understanding of personal finances, or sudden changes in health.

The Administration on Aging expects that by 2030, the U.S. population over age 65 will have doubled from 2000, with older adults representing 19% of the population. The National Center of Elder Abuse estimates that up to 2,000,000 older adults are victims of abuse each year in the U.S. Victims of elder financial abuse in the United States lose close to \$3 billion each year.

A safe and peaceful life is our right at any age. Safe and confidential resources exist for developing safety plans, counseling, support groups, legal support and housing options. Ask the older adults in your life: "Is anyone taking your money without your permission? Are you afraid of anyone? Is anyone hurting you?" National experts suggest that these simple questions can help to discover elder abuse that would otherwise be missed.

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To address this growing concern, the Minnesota S.A.F.E. (Stop Abuse and Financial Exploitation) Elders Initiative developed a toolkit for use throughout Minnesota to spot and reduce elder abuse. Central to the toolkit is the video titled *Elder Victims: Abused, Exploited, Alone* – a 26 minute documentary created in partnership with Twin Cities Public Television. Free copies of the DVD are available at www.safemn.org, a new website that contains resources, presentations and fact sheets about elder abuse.

Facts to Consider:

Abuse of our most vulnerable seniors occurs in all our communities. Unfortunately it is currently underreported, difficult to spot and even harder to prosecute. Only by addressing this problem at a community level can we ensure that all Minnesota seniors are safe.

- The National Center of Elder Abuse estimates that up to 2,000,000 older adults are victims of abuse each year in the U.S.
- Victims of elder financial abuse in the United States lose close to \$3 billion each year.
- The Administration on Aging expects that by 2030, the U.S. population over age 65 will have doubled from 2000, with older adults representing 19% of the population.
- Typically, elder abuse is committed by a family member or a caregiver and can include physical,

National experts suggest that these simple questions can help to discover elder abuse that would otherwise be missed:

- Is anyone taking your money without your permission?
- Are you afraid of anyone?
- Is anyone hurting you?

If you are or know of an older adult that needs help, call Becker County Human Services at (218) 847-5628 or Toll Free at (866) 454-5628 and ask for “Adult Protection Intake.”

You can also contact the Becker County Sherriff’s Department at 218-847-2661.

If it is an emergency dial 911.