



**July 2018, Volume 19**

## **Elder Abuse**

**Elder abuse takes many forms including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as well as neglect and financial exploitation. Sometimes it is identified as domestic violence in later life. Elder abuse occurs at all levels of economic status and among all racial and ethnic groups. According to the United States Department of Justice, a minimum of one in nine Americans over age 60 have experienced some form of elder abuse in the past year. For every one case of elder abuse reported to authorities at least five more go unreported. For elders who have been mistreated, the risk of death is 300 times greater than those who have not been abused.**

**Abuse of elders takes many different forms, some involving intimidation or threats against the elderly, some involving**

**neglect, and others involving financial trickery. The most common are:**

**Physical elder abuse — The non-accidental use of force against an elderly person that results in physical pain, injury, or impairment. Such abuse includes not only physical assaults such as hitting or shoving but the inappropriate use of drugs, restraints, or confinement.**

**Emotional elder abuse — The treatment of an older adult in ways that cause emotional or psychological pain or distress, including:**

- **Intimidation through yelling or threats**
- **Humiliation and ridicule**
- **Habitual blaming or scapegoating**
- **Ignoring the elderly person**
- **Isolating an elder from friends or activities**
- **Terrorizing or menacing the elderly person**

**Sexual elder abuse — Contact with an elderly person without their consent. Such contact can involve physical sex acts, but activities such as showing an elderly person pornographic material, forcing the person to watch sex acts, or forcing the elder to undress are also considered sexual elder abuse.**

**Elder neglect — Failure to fulfill a caretaking obligation. This constitutes more than half of all reported cases of elder abuse. It can be intentional or unintentional, based on factors such as ignorance or denial that an elderly charge needs as much care as they do.**

**Financial exploitation – –** The unauthorized use of an elderly person's funds or property, either by a caregiver or an outside scam artist. An unscrupulous caregiver might:

- Misuse an elder's personal checks, credit cards, or accounts
- Steal cash, income checks, or household goods
- Forge the elder's signature
- Engage in identity theft

Typical scams that target elders include:

- Announcement of a "prize" that the elderly person has won but must pay money to claim
- Phony charities
- Investment fraud

**Healthcare fraud and abuse – Carried out by unethical doctors, nurses, hospital personnel, and other professional care providers. This can include:**

- **Not providing healthcare, but charging for it**
- **Overcharging or double-billing for medical care or services**
- **Getting kickbacks for referrals to other providers or for prescribing certain drugs**
- **Overmedicating or undermedicating conditions**
- **Recommending fraudulent remedies for illnesses or other medical**
- **Medicaid fraud**

## **Elder Self-Neglect**

**One of the most common forms of elder abuse encountered by geriatric care managers is self-neglect. Physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity can mean that an older adult is no longer able to perform essential self-care. They may lack basic personal hygiene, appear dehydrated, malnourished, or underweight, live in increasingly unsanitary or dirty conditions, and be unable to pay bills or properly manage their medications. Self-neglect can be a sign of depression, grief, dementia, or other medical problem, and in many cases, the older person will refuse to seek assistance. They may be in denial, feel ashamed about needing help, or worried about losing their independence.**

## **Adult Protective Services**

Lucas County Department of Job and Family Services are required to investigate and evaluate all reports of suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults age 60 and older. These adults may be handicapped due to aging or they may have physical or mental impairments which prevent them from providing for their own care and protection. When funding and services are available, adults who experience abuse, neglect and/or exploitation are offered support for protection and self-sufficiency. As the elderly population increases, reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation increase.

If you would like to report abuse call: 419.213.8663.

<http://co.lucas.oh.us/898/Adult-Protective-Services>

## **Organizational Highlight:**

### **Coalition of Organizations Protecting Elders (COPE)**

**Coalition of Organizations Protecting Elders (COPE)** is a community-based team of organizations in Lucas County, Ohio committed to addressing abuse, neglect, and exploitation of elders through enhanced collaboration and coordination of community resources.

### **COPE History**

The Coalition of Organizations Protecting Elders (COPE) originated as an idea from the 2005 Ohio Attorney General's Task Force Report on Elder Abuse. The report recommended that communities form coalitions of agencies, both public and private and from a variety of disciplines, to combat elder abuse. COPE was officially formed in January 2010 when Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE) received a grant from the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA). Individuals from more than 30 organizations worked together to develop mission and values statements and to plan activities.

### **COPE Vision**

A community where older adults are safe, respected, valued, and free from

abuse, neglect and exploitation.

## **COPE Mission**

To address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation through enhanced collaboration and coordination of community resources.

## **COPE Values**

- We believe that all elders have dignity, value, and self-worth regardless of age;
- We value collaborative efforts that focus on positive outcomes;
- We recognize the valuable contributions that elders make to enhance our community;
- We value the safety and well-being of elders in our community;
- We value the contributions of our elders to our community and their right to self-determination;
- We believe in the right of elders to lead productive and purposeful lives, free of all abuse;
- We are committed to providing a strong voice on behalf of elders and preserve their rights and freedom;
- We collaborate together to accomplish more than what one partner can do alone.

## **COPE Committees**

**Steering Committee**

Guides the organization and oversees COPE activities.

**Interdisciplinary Team**

Collaborates among COPE members providing assistance in problem solving, and identifying resources and services for difficult cases involving elder abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.

**Financial Exploitation Prevention Committee**

A collaboration of COPE members and representatives of financial institutions working to identify strategies to prevent financial exploitation.

**Advocacy Committee**

Addresses concerns of elder abuse by educating federal, state and local legislators.

**Education and Awareness Committee**

Plans and coordinates educational opportunities to increase awareness and prevention of elder abuse.

**Membership Committee**

Works to promote and increase COPE membership.



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