

# **\*\*ELDER ABUSE – OPEN YOUR EYES \*\***

## **Health and Wellness**

**September, 2019**

### **ELDER ABUSE:**

Each year hundreds of thousands of older persons are abused, neglected and exploited by family members and others. Many victims are people who are frail and vulnerable; who cannot help themselves; and who depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Many times the victim is female, over age 75 and dependent on a spouse, relative or friend to provide care, food and shelter. The abuser is likely to be a spouse or adult child who lives in the same house and is responsible for providing care to the older person.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?**

Elder abuse can present itself in various forms-**physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, financial or material exploitation, neglect, and self-neglect.** It is not always easy to identify and can often be hidden or disguised.

- Bruises or broken bones may be blamed on falls when the real cause is pinching or beating.
- Weight loss may be blamed on illness or lack of appetite when the real cause is starvation, neglect or self-neglect.
- Dementia may be blamed on "old age" when the real cause is malnutrition or drug interactions or side effects.

Other clues that may indicate elder abuse:

- The older person next door never goes outside or never sees visitors.
- A bank teller may notice someone claiming to represent the older person withdrawing large sums of money.
- An attorney might question why an older person would sign over his home to a relative.

Although these circumstances don't always mean elder abuse, it is important to be aware that elder abuse can occur at anytime to anyone.

### **REPORTING ELDER ABUSE:**

If you suspect mistreatment of an older person or feel you are being mistreated, you should report it to your local:

**Area Agency on Aging:**

**814-226-4640**

**After hours: 911 or**

**The Dept. of Aging's Elder**

**Abuse Hotline:**

**1-800-490-8505**

You can call **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.** Your call will be connected to local Protective Services staff. Even if you are not sure abuse has occurred, but feel you have a reason to be concerned about the older person's well-being, you should call. **ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.**

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

Your Area Agency on Aging has specially trained staff to deal with these situations and to investigate the report. Your name will not be revealed. The staff person will telephone or visit the older person suspected of being abused. If abuse has occurred, steps will be taken to protect the victim, stop the abuse and prevent it from happening again. The Area Agency on Aging may offer temporary shelter if the victims in physical danger or provide other protective services. The type of services depends on the abused person's immediate needs.

If abuse has not occurred, but the older person or family appears to need assistance, the staff person may refer the family to other services available through the Area Agency on Aging or other agencies.

**All reports of suspected abuse are investigated within 72 hours. In life-threatening situations, investigation begins immediately. If you suspect elder abuse, don't wait – act NOW!**



**Medicare Annual Enrollment is fast approaching!**  
**October 15<sup>th</sup> – December 7<sup>th</sup>**

Clarion Area Agency on Aging, Inc. is a United Way Agency\*

