

What do we need to know about Elder Abuse?

Each year, elders in later life are abused, neglected and exploited often by a loved one or trusted person. Elder abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of sex, social status or ethnic background. It wears many faces, and typically occurs at the hands of the people who are most trusted by the victims – their spouses, children, grandchildren, caregivers, financial or other advisors.

There are six types of elder maltreatment:

Physical Abuse is the use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Physical abuse may include but is not limited to such acts of violence such as: striking, hitting, beating, pushing, shoving, shaking, slapping, kicking, pinching and burning. Other examples of physical abuse are inappropriate use of drugs and using physical restraints.

Emotional Abuse/Psychological Abuse refers to behaviors that harm an elder's self-worth or emotional well being. Examples include: name calling, scaring, embarrassing, destroying property, or isolation from family friends or outside activities.

Neglect is defined as the refusal or failure to provide an elder with necessities such as: food, water, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medicine, comfort, personal safety, and other essentials including medical care.

Abandonment happens when a caregiver leaves an elder alone and no longer provides care for him or her.

Financial or material exploitation is the illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets. This can be done directly or via manipulation and coercion.

Sexual Abuse involves forcing an elder to take part in a sexual act when the elder does not or cannot consent.

How can we help prevent elder maltreatment?

- Listen to elders and their caregivers.
- Report abuse or suspected abuse to Adult Protective Services.
- Educate yourself and others about how to recognize and report elder abuse.
- Learn how the signs of elder abuse differ from the normal aging process.

If you take care of an elder here are some things you can do to prevent violence:

- Get help from friends, family, or local relief care groups.
- Take a break—if only for a couple of hours.
- Involve more people than just family in financial matters.
- Seek counseling or other support if you are feeling depressed.
- Seek help if you are having problems with drug or alcohol abuse.

If you or someone you know has gone through domestic violence/sexual assault, elder abuse, general crimes, stalking, bullying, or teen dating violence and are in need of help and support, or if you would like more information about the services the DOVE Program provides, please contact at 218-983-4656. If you are in immediate danger or need someone to talk to, call the 24-hour-crisis line at 1-877-830-3683.