

Elder Abuse Factsheets

Developed by the National Latin@ Network, a project of Casa de Esperanza, in collaboration with the National Hispanic Council on Aging

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

**CHERISH
OUR FAMILIES**

**Crear comunidad
Alcanzar nuestros sueños**

Create change

Older Adult Factsheet

Elder abuse can happen to anyone. What are the warning signs?

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If you or someone you know is being abused, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has Spanish speaking advocates available around the clock at 1-800-799-SAFE

For more information about elder abuse, visit the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) at: www.ncall.us

Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. The abuse of older adults is a serious problem and victims may feel alone or like they have nowhere to go for help. Most offenders are spouses, partners, family members, caregivers and other persons in a relationship where the victim and society expect compassion and caring. Elder abuse can take many forms:

- Financial Abuse happens when people (including loved ones) pressure older adults to give them money.
What to look for: irregular bank withdrawals, lack of affordable amenities.
- Emotional Abuse happens when older adults are intimidated or scared to do the things they enjoy doing. No one should have to live in fear or feel threatened.
What to look for: changed eating patterns, fear, passivity, isolated from family and friends.
- Sexual Abuse is defined as non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person. Sexual contact with any person incapable of giving consent is also considered sexual abuse. Forcing someone to watch something of a sexual nature against their will is sexual abuse.
What to look for: torn or stained clothing, reported abdominal pain, emotional distress.
- Physical Abuse is when someone causes pain or injury to another person. Older adults deserve to live without violence. Physical abuse can have long lasting effects.
What to look for: unexplained falls or injuries, signs of physical restraint, etc.
- Neglect happens when the person that is meant to care for an older adult avoids this responsibility.
What to look for: poor hygiene, lost weight, malnourishment, isolation.

No matter how the abuse of older adults happens, it is wrong. Help is available regardless of immigration status and English proficiency. If you or someone you know is being hurt, you could find ways to get help, even if you cannot prove the abuse. Someone is available by phone around the clock and eager to provide help for everyone, in both Spanish and English. Getting help to end the abuse of older adults is the right thing to do. No one deserves to live in fear!

Family and Friends Factsheet

What is elder abuse?

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If you believe an older adult is being abused, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has Spanish speaking advocates available around the clock at 1-800-799-SAFE.

For more information about elder abuse, visit the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) at: www.ncall.us

Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Latin@ communities are no exception.

- It is estimated that 820,000 to 2.5 million incidents of elder abuse are reported each year. However, for every reported incident of abuse, there are many older adults that suffer in silence.
- Most offenders are spouses, partners, family members, caregivers and other persons in a relationship where the victim and society expect compassion and caring.
- There are specific factors that may get in the way of reporting the abuse of Latin@ older adults:
 - Reliance on the family and the shame or fear of reporting family members
 - Language barriers
 - Immigration status

Abuse is more than just physical harm. Recognize the warning signs:

- Financial Exploitation
 - Example: forcefully convincing an older adult to sign a check or will
 - Warning Signs: valuable items, like jewelry, go missing without an explanation, discrepancy between standard of living and available assets
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse
 - Example: Preventing an older adult from speaking with family
 - Warning Signs: withdrawn behavior, fearful around certain people
- Physical Abuse
 - Example: Slapping, hitting, punching, burning, choking, and throwing things, being rough with intimate body parts during care giving
 - Warning Signs: unexplained injuries, visiting multiple doctors for same condition
- Abandonment and Neglect
 - Example: desertion by an individual with responsibility to care for an older adult
 - Warning Signs: poor hygiene, lost weight, malnourishment

Show respect for our *abuelitos* by learning the warning signs of elder abuse, sharing that information with your family and friends, and supporting an older adult who is experiencing the abuse by helping them learn about their rights and available resources. Remember that older adults are entitled to make their own decisions and we need to be respectful of that. There are some instances however, when older adults may be incapacitated, such as individuals living with dementia. In these situations, it is important to report the abuse. Educating and empowering our families builds on the strength of our Latin@ culture and is one of the best ways to end the abuse of older adults. People stand ready to provide help, regardless of age, English proficiency and immigration status.

Care Providers Factsheet

The Facts on Abuse of Older Adults

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The National Domestic Violence Hotline has Spanish speaking advocates available around the clock at 1-800-799-SAFE that can provide the older adult with a number of options and available resources. For more information about elder abuse, visit the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) at: www.ncall.us

If there are issues regarding immigration status, inquire about special immigration remedies for victims of crime through the U visa or the Self-Petition under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Elder abuse can take many forms. It is important to be aware of these warning signs:

- Financial Exploitation
 - Example: forcefully convincing an older adult to sign a check or will, controlling the older adult's assets against their will
 - Warning Sign: valuable items, like jewelry, missing without explanation, discrepancy between standard of living and available assets
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse
 - Example: preventing an older adult from speaking with family, threatening to leave her/him, threatening to commit suicide, humiliating, ridiculing, taking walker, wheelchair, glasses and/or dentures
 - Warning Sign: withdrawn behavior, fearful around certain people
- Physical Abuse
 - Slapping, hitting, punching, burning, choking, and throwing things, being rough with intimate body parts during care giving
 - Warning Sign: unexplained injuries, visiting multiple doctors for same type of condition
- Sexual Abuse
 - Example: tricking an older adult into non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
 - Warning Sign: torn, stained, or bloody clothes, bruising on neck, thighs, genital injuries
- Abandonment and Neglect
 - Example: desertion by an individual with responsibility to care for an older adult
 - Warning Sign: poor hygiene, lost weight, malnourishment

Who are the perpetrators? Sadly, many victims have ongoing, trusting relationships with abusers, such as spouse/life partner, adult children, other family members, caregivers, and fiduciaries. The abuse often occurs in the person's home (a private dwelling in the community or an institution, such as a nursing facility.)

Reports of Elder Abuse. The number of annual reported incidents of abuse of older adults in the United States range from 820,000 to 2.5 million. However, for every incident of abuse that is reported, there are many older adults that suffer in silence. The following are some of the factors that complicate the reporting of elder abuse for Latin@ older adults:

- Reliance on the family and the shame or fear of reporting family members
- Language barriers
- Immigration status
- Lack of information about their rights or available services

There is no need to prove an older adult is being abused to help them get the resources they need. Age, immigration status, limited English proficiency and sexual and gender identity are not barriers to helping older adults age with dignity and free from violence.