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## **Elder Abuse Awareness Day Observed in June**

Did you know that every year one in 10 Americans over the age of 60 experience elder abuse, neglect or exploitation? And that's only part of the picture. Experts believe that elder abuse is significantly under-reported. In fact, research suggests that as few as one in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is recognized each June 15<sup>th</sup> in an effort to unite communities around the world in raising awareness about elder abuse. The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) encourages the community to learn more about elder abuse and become more aware of the risk factors and warning signs.

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. The specificity of laws varies from state to state, but broadly defined, abuse may be:

- **Physical Abuse** - Inflicting, or threatening to inflict, physical pain or injury on a vulnerable elder, or depriving them of a basic need.
- **Emotional Abuse** - Inflicting mental pain, anguish, or distress on an elder person through verbal or nonverbal acts.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind.
- **Exploitation** - Illegal taking, misuse, or concealment of funds, property, or assets of a vulnerable elder.
- **Neglect** - Refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, health care or protection for a vulnerable elder.
- **Abandonment** - The desertion of a vulnerable elder by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person.

The National Center on Elder Abuse also adds that those at risk could vary as, like other types of domestic violence, elder abuse is extremely complex. Generally, a combination of psychological, social, and economic factors, along with the mental and physical conditions of the victim and the perpetrator, contribute to the occurrence of elder maltreatment. Risk factors may include a history of domestic violence, personal problems of abusers, isolation, caregiver stress, and personal characteristics of the elder.

What's important is being aware of the risk factors and warning signs associated with elder abuse. Warning signs could include physical marks or physical mistreatment; behavioral

changes; and sudden changes in financial situations. If you or someone you know has been the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect, it is important to report the suspected abuse immediately. Call your doctor or confide in a family member or friend you trust, or call your local Job and Family Services agency to report elder abuse occurring in the community. To report abuse in long-term care facilities, call the AAA7 Ombudsman Program at 1-800-582-7277. If someone you know is in immediate, life-threatening danger, call your local police department or sheriff's office, or 9-1-1 immediately.

For more general information about elder abuse, log on to <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse>.

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. provides services on a non-discriminatory basis. These services are available to help older adults and those with disabilities live safely and independently in their own homes through services paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, other federal and state resources, as well as private pay. The AAA7's Resource Center is also available to anyone in the community looking for information or assistance with long-term care options. Available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm, the Resource Center is a valuable contact for learning more about options and what programs and services are available for assistance.

Those interested in learning more can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 (TTY: 711). Here, individuals can speak directly with a Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency also offers an assessment at no cost for those who are interested in learning more. Information is also available at [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org), or the Agency can be contacted through e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org). The Agency also has a Facebook page located at [www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7](https://www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7).

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