



NEWS COLUMN – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Elder Abuse Awareness

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World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is June 15, 2023. According to the U.S. Administration for Community Living, elder abuse refers 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. Put simply, elder abuse occurs when someone intentionally acts in a way that harms an older adult. The National Center on Elder Abuse reports that approximately one in six older adults is affected by elder abuse every year. Elder abuse can take many forms: physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, as well as neglect and abandonment.

Possible signs of elder abuse include:

- The person has bruises, cuts or other signs of physical harm.
- The person suddenly begins acting differently.
- The person avoids doing things they used to enjoy.
- The person stops spending time with people they used to enjoy being around, or starts spending time with other people instead.
- Another person refuses to allow visitors to see the person alone.
- The person's home has become unclean, needs repairs, or is dangerous.
- The person is not eating well, shows signs of dehydration, or is not clean, groomed and dressed appropriately.
- Relatives and other people who were not a big part of the person's life before suddenly become interested in their rights and property.
- The person, suddenly and without explanation, changes their will or transfers money, bank account access, or property to someone else.
- The person cannot or will not explain what happened to missing money or property.
- The person has several unpaid bills or service disconnection notices.
- The person has missed several medical appointments.
- The person takes more or less of their medications than they are supposed to.

According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, elder abuse tends to be under-reported, as they receive approximately 88 reports to Adult Protective Services each day for the entire state. The National Institutes of Health estimates; however, that most cases of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation are never reported. If you see or suspect any of the types of abuse listed above in the home environment, be the person who acts. You can file a report anonymously, and there is no penalty or cost for doing so. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services oversees the state's Adult Protective Services program for individuals age 60 and over. To report suspected abuse, call the statewide, toll-free helpline at 1-855-644-6277.

The Ohio Department of Aging is home to the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which advocates for individuals receiving home care, assisted living and nursing home services. To report suspected abuse involving those receiving home care or residing in an assisted living or nursing facility, call the State Ombudsman Office at 1-800-282-1206, or call your local Area Agency on Aging District 7 at 1-800-582-7277. The AAA7 covers the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.