

# Caregiver Assistance News

*“Caring for You - Caring for Others”*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,  
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



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## **Elder Emotional Abuse**

Abuse can happen to anyone, but older adults are particularly vulnerable. This is especially true if they are sick or need medical care. Each year, hundreds of thousands of adults over the age of 60 are abused, neglected, or financially exploited. This is called elder abuse and it takes many forms.

### **Emotional or Psychological Abuse**

*Emotional or psychological* abuse is believed to be the most common form of elder abuse. It is also the most difficult form of abuse to detect because it often lacks clear evidence. It involves threats, humiliation, fear, manipulation, or other cruel conduct that take advantage of an older adult’s vulnerability in ways that control or humiliate.



Abuse comes with verbal or nonverbal communication such as harassment, scolding, and insults. Sometimes, older adults are threatened with physical punishment or withholding basic needs; for example: denying food or making an older adult wait long periods for food, medication, heat, or basic care. Other examples include placing the individual’s walker, cane, glasses, dentures, or other necessary items out of reach.

Having a physical disability almost doubles a woman’s risk of emotional abuse. But even grandfathers can be abused, especially if they care for grandchildren.

Often, an elder abuser is a highly stressed close relative who depends on the older adult financially, psychologically, or both. It is also known, that 95 percent of men who physically abuse their intimate partners also psychologically abuse them. Psychologically abusive men are more likely to use weapons against their partners, have prior criminal arrests, abuse substances, and have employment problems. Women who provide the majority of the household’s income are more likely to be psychologically abused.

*Emotional neglect* is when an older adult is deprived of healthy mental well-being. Long periods of solitude and failure to provide companionship contribute to neglect—even if the older adult is provided essentials such as food, water, and shelter—but no opportunity for social interaction. Controlling the older adult’s freedom can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and emotional pain. Psychological abuse and neglect can make clinical depression and other mental health issues worse.

## Signs of Possible Abuse

Older adults age 80 and older suffer abuse at a rate two to three times greater than the population as a whole. The abused older adult may show some of the following signs:

- passivity, withdrawal, or increasing depression
- evasiveness or reluctance to talk openly
- avoidance of eye or verbal contact with the caregiver or family member
- cowering in the presence of the abuser; hopelessness, anxiety, or feelings of powerlessness
- confusion that is unrelated to any medical condition
- change in sleeping or eating habits
- contradictory statements
- missing appointments
- isolation from friends or other family

When assessing whether abuse has occurred, it is also helpful to observe the interaction with caregivers or significant others involved in the older adult's immediate situation. Some characteristics of those who commit the abuse:

- history of substance abuse or abuse of others
- exaggerated concern or lack of concern
- blaming the older adult for common acts, such as incontinence
- aggressive behaviors
- treating the older adult like a child or in a dehumanizing way
- not allowing the older adult to be interviewed alone
- responding defensively when questioned or becoming hostile or evasive

*Source: National Center on Elder Abuse; Today's Geriatric Medicine; Psychology Today*

## Resources to Call for Help

- The local Adult Protective Services agency may be able to provide some community referrals. If the person lives in a nursing home or assisted living facility, or receives home care services, contact the Long-Term Care Ombudsman locally at the Area Agency on Aging at **1-800-582-7277**.
- Check the Eldercare Locator website for community services or call **1-800-677-1116**.
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**, or **1-800-727-3224 (TTY)**.

*Source: National Elder Abuse Incidence Study*



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Do You Need a Break?

Caregiver stress can trigger elder abuse. Some sources of caregiver stress include depression, lack of support from other caregivers, and a feeling that caregiving is burdensome or without emotional rewards. Adult children who have no financial resources to provide care are especially vulnerable to stress. Caregivers who are solely responsible for an older adult's care may become isolated from relatives and friends. This can be dangerous because it cuts them off from the support they need to cope with caregiving. Isolation also makes it harder for other people to intervene when an older adult is being abused or neglected. If you are a caregiver and feel overwhelmed, seek therapy, help from other family members, or consider other care options for the older adult. Many state and non-profit agencies also offer respite services to provide family members with temporary relief from the stress of caring for an older adult. Find a support group for older adult caregivers.



Source: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse>



## - HELPFUL TIP -

Remember that pointing, nodding your head, or using other body language will not be effective communication with someone who cannot see clearly.



## Memory Care

People with dementia often have depression and anxiety. Your reaction depends on how you interpret the behavior. If you can be aware of what they need and feel or what is upsetting them, you may have an easier time responding calmly.



## Sign-Up for Our E-Mail News!!

Stay up-to-date on news and updates from the Area Agency on Aging District 7 by signing up for our e-mail news.

Just go to our website at [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) and click on the red button at the top right of the page that says "Sign Up For E-Mail News!" Fill out the information and sign up!





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*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## **Safety Tips - Protecting Seniors from Scams**

Anyone can be taken advantage of, from anywhere, and at any age. But older adults are more likely to become the victim of exploitation and, if cognitively impaired, can be twice as vulnerable. Scammers make a special effort to lure trusting older adults; they will entice them with false lottery winnings, fake inheritances, illegitimate sweepstakes, or “special” opportunities to donate to their charity.

Use special caution where con artists connect with potential victims: by way of the phone, asking for personal, credit card or social security information.

In the postal mail, offering free concert tickets or sending flyers “just for you” with special opportunities.

The Internet offers us the convenience of email and shopping; but keep in mind, it is a predator’s tool for mining unauthorized personal information.

Door-to-door sales are still used today to steal your valuables.

