

The Growing Problem of Elder Abuse - How To Recognize It and What To Do About It

October 18, 2016 - As the country's population ages, the number of elderly people who are falling victim to elder abuse is only going to grow. Unfortunately, elder abuse is believed to be one of the most underreported forms of crime there is. Victims are often embarrassed that they have been taken advantage of, and the people taking advantage of them are often family members and close friends. But there are ways to recognize when elder abuse is occurring and things you can do to stop it.

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Elder abuse comes in many different forms. It can include physical violence, sexual abuse, neglect and fraud. According to most definitions, anyone over 60 years of age who experiences this type of abuse is an elder abuse victim.

It is estimated that 10% of people over 60 have experienced elder abuse at least once. According to a 2014 report from the US Dept. of Health and Human Services, there are now nearly 63 million people in the United States that fall into this age range. And according to some estimates, as many as 5 million people experience elder abuse once a year. This means that most victims are victimized on a regular basis.

That's really not surprising when you look at the people who commit elder abuse. As previously mentioned, they are often family members. But they may also be hired care-givers. People who are brought into homes to take care of elderly relatives or employees of assisted living facilities. They are the people who most people - victims and their families - think they can trust the most.

There are recognizable signs of elder abuse. These include bruises and physical injuries, sudden changes in mood and relatively sudden changes that include poor hygiene. If you notice that your elderly relatives are constantly fighting with their care-givers, that's a warning sign.

Because many victims are targeted for financial crimes, another warning sign is a sudden change in financial status. The known cost of financial elder abuse is close to \$3 Billion annually. In all likelihood, this number is low due to underreporting.

If you suspect that someone is being victimized there are a variety to resources available. These include both state and federal agencies and in many large cities, local help is also available. The National Center on Elder Abuse is US Government Agency that provides a list of resources available by state. In addition to the resources they can provide,

you can contact your state attorney general's office and your local district attorney. In many cases, these offices have specialized units that investigate and prosecute elder abuse. If nothing else, they will likely be able to point you in the right direction.

byJim Malmberg

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