



Together, we have the power to prevent elder abuse.
State Fact Sheet: **Nebraska**

Why Should I Care About Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is an under recognized problem with devastating financial and even life threatening consequences.

Every day, headlines throughout the U.S. paint a grim picture of seniors who have been abused, neglected, and exploited often by people they trust the most. Abusers may be spouses, family members, personal acquaintances, or professionals in positions of trust; or opportunistic strangers who prey on the vulnerable.

How big is the problem? No one really knows. Relatively few cases are identified, as elders often are reluctant to report the mistreatment. In Nebraska in 2015 Adult Protective Services investigated approximately 3,000 allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults. Over 300 persons 60 and older were found to have been abused, neglected, and exploited in 2015. But, we know that elder abuse goes largely unreported. For every reported case, experts believe that as many as 23 cases go unreported.

One thing is for certain: elder abuse can happen to *any* older individual – your neighbor, your loved one - it can even happen to *you*.

What is Elder Abuse?

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, elder abuse refers to intentional or negligent acts by a

caregiver or “trusted” individual that causes (or potentially causes) harm to a vulnerable elder. Most common categories of abuse are neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse and exploitation, and self-neglect.

In Nebraska, Adult Protective Services serves vulnerable adults who are defined as persons 18 years and older who have a substantial mental and/or functional impairment. Persons eligible for Adult Protective Services have a substantial physical limitation or mental condition that prevents them from living independently or providing self-care. These persons are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

The types of abuse allegations investigated by Adult Protective Services workers are physical abuse, cruel punishment, unreasonable confinement, exploitation, sexual exploitation and abuse, and neglect, including self-neglect.

Who is at Risk?

Elder abuse can occur *anywhere* – in the home, in nursing homes, or other institutions. It affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Based on available information, women and “older” elders are more likely to be victimized. Isolation and dementia are significant risk factors. Abusers of older adults are both women and men, and may be family members, friends, or “trusted others.”

Department of Health & Human Services



What Should I Do if I Suspect Elder Abuse?

If you or someone you know is in a life threatening situation or immediate danger, contact 911 or the local police or sheriff.

Who Must Report?

Any person may report a cause to believe that a vulnerable adult has been abused, neglected or exploited or observes a vulnerable adult in such a situation.

Mandatory reporters are law enforcement and persons in the medical, developmental disability, behavioral health fields including paraprofessionals (Neb. Rev. Statute Sec. 28-372).

Nebraska Resources

Adult & Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-652-1999

Long Term Care Ombudsman
1-800-942-7830 (Nebraska only)

State Unit on Aging
1-800-942-7830

Attorney General’s Senior Outreach:
1-888-287-0778

Linea de Crisis en Nebraska
1-877-215-0167

Office of Health Disparities
& Health Equity
(402) 471-0152

National Resources

National Elder Abuse Hotline
1-800-677-1116

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Warning Signs

Often various types of abuse occur at the same time.

- **Physical Abuse** - Slap marks, unexplained bruises, rope marks on wrists, broken bones, and certain types of burns or blisters, such as cigarette burns
- **Neglect** – Untreated pressure ulcers, filth, bugs, unsafe living conditions, lack of medical care, malnutrition or dehydration
- **Sexual Abuse** - Bruises around the breasts or genital area, unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding, and unexplained sexually transmitted diseases
- **Financial Exploitation** - Sudden changes in finances and accounts, altered wills and trusts, unusual bank withdrawals, checks written as “loans” or “gifts,” and loss of property, including missing medications

What Can / Do to Prevent Elder Abuse?

- *Report suspected mistreatment* to your local adult protective services agency (1-800-652-1999) or law enforcement. Although a situation may have already been investigated, if you believe circumstances are getting worse, continue to speak out.
- *Keep in contact* – Talk with your older friends, neighbors, and relatives. Maintaining communication will help decrease isolation, a risk factor for mistreatment. It will also give them a chance to talk about any problems they may be experiencing. Take a look at the elder’s medications. Does the amount in the bottle match with the date of the prescription?
- *Be aware of the possibility of abuse* – Look around and take note of what may be happening with your older neighbors and acquaintances. Do they seem lately to be withdrawn, nervous, fearful, sad, or anxious, especially around certain people, when they have not seemed so in the past? Ask the elder if you may look over bank accounts and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions.
- *Contact your local Area Agency on Aging* office to identify local programs and sources of support, such as *Meals on Wheels*. These programs help elders to maintain health, well-being, and independence – a good defense against abuse.
- *Volunteer* – There are many local opportunities to become involved in programs that provide assistance and support for seniors.
- *Learn more about the issue* - Visit the *National Center on Elder Abuse* website at www.ncea.aoa.gov.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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Hotline: 1-800-652-1999

www.dhhs.ne.gov/weaad

This fact sheet template was created by the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA). Portions were adapted from the NCEA publication: 15 Questions & Answers About Elder Abuse (July 2005), available on the NCEA website at: www.ncea.aoa.gov.

The template was customized with state specific information by the state’s department of aging and/or protective services. The NCEA is not responsible for the state specific information, including any statistics, legal codes, or state contact information provided.

NCEA activities are supported in part by grants from the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (National Adult Protective Services Foundation: 90-AM-3144; National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: 90-AM-3145; University of Delaware: 90-AM-3146). Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Therefore, points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official Administration on Aging or DHHS policy.

The NCEA is a national resource center that provides technical support and information to professionals and advocates working on behalf of older individuals. It also provides information and referral to the public. The NCEA is not an investigation, nor a reporting agency, and cannot intervene in cases of suspected elder mistreatment.

National Center on Elder Abuse/NCEA

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