

# World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

## Nebraska Toolkit



See more at: <https://www.dhhs.ne.gov/WEAAD>

**World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD)**, was launched by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization at the United Nations. The purpose of **WEAAD** is to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect.

This year, the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) has provided the following Kit for us:

### WEAAD 2024 Share Kit For Partners

We are excited to share the **WEAAD 2024 Share Kit** with campaign resources to help spread awareness about elder abuse! The kit includes social media sample messages, slides, and additional outreach tools. Please use these materials to encourage your community to take action and support our shared mission!

**We would also like to draw your attention to several key activities taking place during WEAAD:**

- Get moving for elder justice and join our 4th annual virtual awareness walk, **Walk for WEAAD** (May 1<sup>st</sup> – June 15<sup>th</sup>)! Join the “WEAAD

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Team” (open to all) or create your own team with friends and colleagues!

<https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/walk-for-weaad/>

- Get ready for the **National Weekend of Prayer and Action for Elder Justice (June 7th – 9th)**.

**To observe World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**, we encourage your organization to hold activities during WEAAD Week (June 12th – 16th) to spotlight the mistreatment of older adults, and to communicate with the public the many ways individuals, organizations and communities can take action **NOW**. The need is obvious! Following are some statistics to illustrate the changing demographics and necessity of educating ourselves and our communities about elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation:

**Population**

- **The pace of population aging is much faster than in the past. In 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older outnumbered children younger than 5 years. Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22%. (World Health Organization, 2022)**
- **Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Americans age 60 and older increased by 33% from 57.5 million to 76.5 million. (2021 Profile of Older Americans, Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 2022)**
- **The number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050 (a 47% increase), and the 65-and-older age group's share of the total population is projected to rise from 17% to 23%. (Fact Sheet: Aging in the United States, January 9, 2024, <https://www.prb.org/resources/fact-sheet-aging-in-the-united-states/>)**
- **The 85-plus population is projected to triple (a 208% increase) between 2015 and 2050. (Across the States Profiles of Long-Term Services and Supports, AARP 2018)**
- **The age distribution of the United States is shifting. According to 2021 data, more than 55.8 million adults ages 65 and older live in the U.S., accounting for about 16.8% of the nation's population. By 2040, that proportion is projected to grow to 22%.**
- **Nebraska's senior population (age 65 and older) is 16.9% of the total population. ([https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/pct\\_65plus/NE](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/pct_65plus/NE))**

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- **By 2040, the number of older Americans is expected to climb to 80 million (Urban Institute, 2015). Declining rates of fertility and the aging of the baby boom generation are believed to contribute to the increasing ranks of older adults nationwide. (NCEA, 2022)**
- **Seniors are living longer, but not necessarily better. Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and declining cognitive and physical functioning make elders more vulnerable to victimization.**

Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation

- **One in 10 Americans over age 60—an estimated 5 million elders—is a victim of elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation. (Rosay, A. B., & Mulford, C. F. Prevalence estimates and correlates of elder abuse in the United States: The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey. Journal of elder abuse & neglect. January 2017. Found on the internet at <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/prevalence-estimates-and-correlates-elder-abuse-united-states-national-0>)**
- **At least 10% of adults aged 65 and older will experience some form of elder abuse in a given year, with some older adults simultaneously experiencing more than one type of abuse. (<https://www.justice.gov/file/1098056/download>)**
- **Up to five million older Americans are abused every year. (National Council on Aging, 2022)**
- **37% of seniors report that they are currently being pitched by people calling or mailing them asking for money. (Investor Protection Trust Elder Fraud Survey, 2010)**
- **Illegal call centers overwhelmingly target older adults, to devastating effect. In 2023, 40% of complaints regarding Tech/Customer Support and Government Impersonation scams were over 60, and experienced 58% of the losses (almost \$770 million), more than all other age groups combined. (FBI Elder Fraud Report, 2023)**
- **Social isolation and mental impairment (such as dementia or Alzheimer’s disease) are two factors that make older adults vulnerable to abuse. Recent studies show that nearly half of those with dementia experienced abuse or neglect. Interpersonal violence also occurs at disproportionately higher rates among adults with disabilities. (NCOA, 2022)**
- **5 million older Americans are financially exploited every year. (*How Criminals Steal \$37 Billion a Year from America’s Elderly*, Bloomberg, May 3, 2018)**

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- **Elder financial abuse and fraud costs older Americans as much as \$36.5 billion per year.** (NCOA, 2022)

Under-Reporting of Abuse

- **Only one in every 23.5 cases of elder abuse is reported to any agency** (*Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study Final Report*, Lachs, Mark, Et al., 2011)
- **As few as 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse come to the attention of authorities, making elder abuse significantly under-identified and under-reported.** (*Elder Abuse Statistics and Facts*, 2017)
- **Studies have recognized that projections of abuse likely underestimate the actual population prevalence.** [Pillemer, K., Burnes, D., Riffin, C., & Lachs, M. S. (2016). *Elder abuse: global situation, risk factors, and prevention strategies*. *The Gerontologist*, 56(Suppl\_2), S194-S205.]
- **For every incident of abuse reported to authorities, nearly 24 additional cases remain undetected.** [*Risk factors for elder abuse and neglect: A review of the literature*. Storey, J. E., 2020, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 50, 101339.]
- **Underreports may be caused by a number of factors including an older person's fear of retaliation by the offender, reluctance to disclose the incident because of shame or embarrassment, concern they will be institutionalized, dependency on the offender, and an inability to report because of physical limitations or cognitive impairments.** [Baker, P. R., Francis, D. P., Hairi, N. N., Othman, S., & Choo, W. Y. (2016). *Interventions for preventing abuse in the elderly*. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (8).] (NCEA, 2022)
- **Financial exploitation is self-reported more than all other forms of abuse.** (NCOA, 2017)
- **Elders who have been abused have a 300% higher risk of death when compared to those who have not been mistreated. While likely under-reported, estimates of elder financial abuse and fraud costs to older Americans range from \$2.6 billion to \$36.5 billion annually. Yet, financial exploitation is self-reported at rates higher than emotional, physical, and sexual abuse or neglect.** (NCOA, 2022)

Your office, organization, or agency can be involved in the statewide effort to get the word out about vulnerable adult abuse, neglect and exploitation. Included in this **toolkit** are ideas to

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assist you in planning activities to catch the attention of residents in your community, build a greater awareness of elder abuse and inform the public of what we can **all** do.

Every year, we shine a spotlight on elder and vulnerable adult abuse when we observe **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** (“WEAAD”). This **Toolkit** provides ideas to help you plan events in your area. Included here are materials, resources, a news release, proclamation, and social media messages, as well as information on other sources of support. Copies of these materials can be found at: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/World-Elder-Abuse-Awareness.aspx>.

We invite you to use the **toolkit** to achieve year-round awareness of elder abuse and to focus on what the public can do. No effort is too small to be counted in an awareness campaign, and the more often we put this critical message in front of the public, the greater the impact.

### Activity Ideas – Some of these events may be VIRTUAL

#### \*Reach Out to a New Audience\*

During **WEAAD Week (June 12th – 16th)**, hold an event in key communities each day for widespread awareness and impact. Visit the USC Center for Elder Justice web site at: <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/> for additional resources and ideas.

<https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips/>

### Sponsor Presentations or Discussions about Elder Abuse

Host a presentation on elder abuse and neglect and how to prevent, recognize and report. **Contact local civic organizations - Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions, Sertoma, etc.** - several weeks in advance and ask to present to them. Consider using the PowerPoint and the talking points in this **toolkit**. Outreach can be made to other targeted groups using the following resources:

- **Women:**
  - Churches, beauty salons, widowed persons’ services
  - Every Woman Matters Program, 1-800-532-2227, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Every-Woman-Matters.aspx>
- **Residents in long-term care facilities:**
  - Nebraska Health Care Association, [www.nehca.org](http://www.nehca.org)
  - Nebraska's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Ombudsman.aspx>
- **Caregivers:**
  - Caregiver support groups, local grandparent resource centers, caregiver fairs and Retreats.
  - Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) 402-444-6536, <http://enoa.org>.

- **People with Developmental Disabilities**
  - The Division of Developmental Disabilities, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Developmental-Disabilities.aspx>
  
- **Low-Income Individuals:**
  - Social Security offices
  - Rural and urban health clinics
  - Nebraska Telephone Assistance Program for low-income individuals (800) 526-0017  
<https://psc.nebraska.gov/telecommunications/phone-internet-discount-programs#:~:text=The%20Nebraska%20Telephone%20Assistance%20Program,in%20the%20federal%20Lifeline%20Program.>
  - Seniors in Congregate Meal sites
  - Nebraska's 9 Community Action Agencies, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Commodity-Supplemental-Food-Program.aspx>
  - Rural housing program, [www.rd.usda.gov/ne](http://www.rd.usda.gov/ne)
  - Senior transportation program, <https://www.nebraskatransit.com/>
  - NDOT transit manager, 1400 Highway 2, Lincoln, NE 68509 402-479-4694  
<https://dot.nebraska.gov/>
  - Weatherization program, <https://neo.ne.gov/programs/wx/wx.html>
  
- **Homebound Persons:**
  - Meals on Wheels programs through Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) [https://www.carenebraska.org/list10\\_nebraska\\_Aging\\_Services\\_senior\\_centers.htm](https://www.carenebraska.org/list10_nebraska_Aging_Services_senior_centers.htm)
  - Visiting nurses
  - Mail carriers
  - Home companions (senior companion programs through AAAs).
  
- **People with Limited English Proficiency:**
  - Centers: Asian, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Intercultural Senior Center
  - Radio and television programs
  - Nebraska Appleseed, [www.neappleseed.com](http://www.neappleseed.com)
  
- **Individuals with physical and mental disabilities:**
  - ARC, [www.arc-nebraska.org](http://www.arc-nebraska.org)
  - Easter Seals, <http://www.easterseals.com/ne/our-programs/senior-services/>
  - Behavioral Health Regions, <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Behavioral-Health.aspx>
  - Vocational Rehabilitation offices, <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/>

- **Native Americans:**
  - Native American Senior Centers, Urban Indian Centers, and **Native American Tribes:**
    - *Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition* Elder Program “Tired Moccasins,” <https://www.nuihc.org/community-outreach-tired-moccasins>  
2226 N Street, Omaha, NE 68107, 402-346-0902  
2331 Fairfield Street, Lincoln, NE 68521, 402-434-7177  
Urban Indian Connections, Rosecrance Jackson Center, Sioux City, IA, 712-212-2590 or 800-472-0918  
Action Taxi, 712-252-4777
    - *Omaha Tribe of Nebraska*, PO BOX 368, Macy, Nebraska, 402-837-5391, <https://www.omahatribe.com/>
    - *Ponca Tribe of Nebraska*, 2523 Woodbine Street, PO BOX 288, Niobrara NE 68760, 402-857-3391  
Email : [info@poncatrbe-ne.gov](mailto:info@poncatrbe-ne.gov)  
<https://www.poncatrbe-ne.gov/>
    - *Santee Sioux Nation*, 425 Frazier Ave N. Suite 2, Niobrara, Nebraska, 68760, Phone: 402-857-2302, FAX 402-857-2307, <https://santeesiouxnation.com/>
    - *Winnebago Tribe Elder Abuse Prevention Program*, P.O. Box C, Winnebago, NE 68071, Phone: 402-878-2272, Ext. 1315, <http://www.winnebagotribe.com/>
- **Veterans:**
  - Veterans’ Homes (Bellevue, Grand Island, Norfolk, Scottsbluff),
  - Veterans Service Centers <https://veterans.nebraska.gov/>
  - American Legion <http://www.nebraskalegion.net/>
- **Victims of Domestic Violence:**
  - Domestic Violence Program, APS service offices, [http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_help/](http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/)
- **Visually Impaired Individuals:**
  - Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, <https://ncbvi.nebraska.gov/>
  - Library Commission talking books and Braille services, <http://www.nlc.nebraska.gov/>
- **Hearing Impaired Persons:**
  - Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, <https://ncdhh.nebraska.gov/>

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- **General Population:**
  - Banks, doctors' offices, medical societies, ministries

In this **toolkit** are **talking points** for a presentation. You may use all the information or segments of it depending on the length of your presentation. It provides background information on elder abuse; screening, response, and safety planning; services and community partners; and federal legislation and programs.

### Resources for speakers include:

- Nebraska Department of Banking and Finance (Investment and Securities Fraud)
  - Claire McHenry, Deputy Director, Securities Bureau, 402-471-2171, email: [claire.mchenry@nebraska.gov](mailto:claire.mchenry@nebraska.gov)
- Adult Protective Services Program Specialist (mandatory reporting and red flags for abuse, neglect, and exploitation)
  - Local APS Supervisors
  - Toni Bonsera, DHHS Division of Children and Family Services, APS, 402-219-2515, email: [antonia.bonsera@nebraska.gov](mailto:antonia.bonsera@nebraska.gov)
- Legal Aid of Nebraska
  - Go to <http://www.legalaidofnebraska.org/> for the office in your area
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman (residents' rights)
  - Go to <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-Ombudsman.aspx>
  - Penny Clark, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman - 402-471-9345
- Area Agencies on Aging
  - Go to <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Medicaid%20SUA/Current%20AAA%20and%20ADRC%20Map.pdf#search=area%20agencies%20on%20aging>
- AARP
  - <https://states.aarp.org/nebraska/>
  - 866-389-5651
- Office of Public Guardian
  - Michelle Chaffee - 402-471-8885
  - <https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/programs-services/office-public-guardian>



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- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging-and-Disability-Resource-Center.aspx>
  - 1-402-471-2307
- Local Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Service providers (abuse in later life, resources for victims) Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
  - Go to [http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_help/](http://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/) to locate your local domestic violence sexual assault provider
- **WEAAD** partners to help you reach out to target groups and minorities:
  - DHHS Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity - Phone: 402-471-0152  
<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Health-Disparities-and-Equity.aspx>  
Email: [dhhs.minorityhealth@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.minorityhealth@nebraska.gov)

### Host an Open House

... At your facility and/or the local senior center...

- Provide information about elder abuse and neglect, such as the information in this **toolkit**.
- Make a presentation during the open house about elder abuse and neglect.
- Invite the public to the local senior center for an hour-long lunch and presentation or discussion.
- Invite the public to your facility or the local senior center for an ice cream social and presentation or discussion.

### Write a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed

- Newspapers accept feedback from the community on topics of concern to their readers. Describe the importance of respect, dignity and caring throughout people's lives, or illustrate an incident where the rights of older adults were not protected, or their needs were not being met.
- Following are two approaches:
  - Newspaper policies regarding letters to the editor may vary, but providing a well-written, succinct letter that contains useful information could be accepted for printing.
  - Newspapers also consider op-eds from the community, which are longer and usually placed in a position of greater prominence on the editorial page. You may need to contact local editors for their agreement to run your op-ed piece.
- Sample letters to the editor, op-eds, and other resources to enhance awareness of your agency's observation of **WEAAD** are available at:  
<https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips/>

### Public Service Announcements

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DHHS makes a public service announcement (“PSA”) available for radio stations across the state. Radio stations run PSAs as a public service and at no cost. Call your local radio stations and ask them to consider running the PSA. A video version is also available at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/weaad>. In addition, you may request a 30-second PSA for non-profit organizations about **WEAAD...** with a mention of your agency.

- **Nebraska PSA:** Did you know that there is a silent crisis from east to west and north to south in Nebraska? Elderly Nebraskans may fear retribution, lack of care, or embarrassment! June 15th is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**, an opportunity to consider the financial exploitation, neglect, and physical abuse of vulnerable or senior adults living in silent fear. For more information, visit [www.dhhs.ne.gov/WEAAD](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/WEAAD). To report elder or vulnerable adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation, call **1-800-652-1999**. Brought to you by your Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.
- **WEAAD organization PSA:** Every day, seniors are victims of financial exploitation, neglect, and physical abuse. Your elderly neighbors could be suffering out of fear of retribution, because of a lack of care, from embarrassment, or concern about institutionalization. They may be afraid to speak out because the abuser is a member of their own family, a caregiver on whom they depend, or someone they know. If you suspect someone is a victim of elder abuse, call **1-800-652-1999**. You can remain anonymous, if you wish. On behalf of (*your agency*) thank you for caring. Again, call **1-800-652-1999**.
- Several PSAs, flyers, sample press releases and other resources to help make your agency’s observation of **WEAAD** are available at <https://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/tools-and-tips/>.

### Hold a Dedication or Announcement

If you have moved into a new building, added to your building, launched a new program, or have other noteworthy changes, consider holding a dedication or announcement and **CELEBRATE**. This provides an opportunity to bring attention to all your activities as well as to elder abuse and neglect issues.

### Use the Internet and Social Media

- Post information on the front page of your **website** leading up to and following **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** with a link to further information, such as DHHS’ Adult Protective Services site: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Adult-Protective-Services.aspx>, the State Unit on Aging <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Aging.aspx> and the nation-wide Administration for Community Living <https://www.acl.gov/>.
- Also post information on your social media sites, such as **Facebook**. Social networking is an excellent way to engage your community around this important and timely subject. Following are guidelines for social media postings:

Keep the **WEAAD** theme in mind: “**Building Strong Support for Elders**”

- **Hashtag Ideas:**
  - **#WEAAD**
  - **#WEAAD2024**
  - **#ElderAbuse**
  - **#Eldercare**
- **Some tips for composing effective Facebook posts**
  - Have a clear and concise message
  - Make your posts a call to action
  - Turn your followers into effective advocates, give them a clear action to take
  - When reposting, add your own commentary or add a link to additional media on the subject
  - Use popular hashtags in moderation; using more than two hashtags can muddle your message and is not recommended
  - Add something visual to your post to increase interest: a photo or a link with a thumbnail or video can generate significantly more attention
  - Check out the logos from our **toolkit**
  - If you are planning a **WEAAD** event, post about it!
- Below are some sample posts that you can customize and use. Use the **WEAAD** theme and hashtag when posting: **#WEAAD** or **#WEAAD2024**:
  - Be a part of a nation united to stop elder abuse! Retweet to raise awareness. **#WEAAD**
  - What can one person do? One person can change the world! **#WEAAD**
  - Share a picture of an older adult you admire. Write about what you respect about them! Abuse cannot thrive where respect resides! **#WEAAD2023**
  - Building Strong Support for Elders! **#WEAAD**
  - Protecting our elders begins at home. Check on the older adults in your life today! **#WEAAD**
  - I’m rocking my purple ribbon! What are you doing to raise awareness about elder abuse today? **#WEAAD2023**
  - Abuse cannot survive where respect resides! Act to protect elders! **#WEAAD**
- **Facebook Posts** – Facebook has expanded its features over the years to include the ability to follow organizations, and public figures, but it still maintains a more personal, somewhat slower-paced user environment.
  - Host a Facebook challenge inviting people to share pictures of elders they admire and share why they respect them. *Abuse cannot survive where respect*

*resides. We invite you to share our challenge post below along with our other sample posts.*

○ **Facebook Campaign – Sample post**

June 15<sup>th</sup> is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!** We will be observing **WEAAD Week** June 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. Join our challenge! Share a picture of your parents, grandparents, or other older adult in your life and tell us something that you admire or respect about them. *Abuse cannot survive where respect resides!* Add our hashtag: **#WEAAD** or **#WEAAD2024**. Share to your own Facebook page, or the [National Center on Elder Abuse](https://ncea.acl.gov/home#gsc.tab=0) page <https://ncea.acl.gov/home#gsc.tab=0> and stand united against elder abuse.

**Other Sample Posts**

- Did you know that an estimated 1 in 10 American elders are being abused, neglected, or exploited every year? It is a secret national shame. Want to be part of the solution? June 15<sup>th</sup> is **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and WEAAD Week** is June 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. Take action to raise awareness. Invite a friend to like the **WEAAD** Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/NationalCenteronElderAbuse](http://www.facebook.com/NationalCenteronElderAbuse) **#WEAAD**
- Showing off my **ROYAL PURPLE** showing **Strong Support for Elders** and to remember **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!** **Everybody** join in and wear **PURPLE** – the color of respect and honor – for our elders and raise awareness of elder neglect, abuse and exploitation! **#WEAAD2024**
- *Today I am wearing a purple ribbon to honor survivors of elder abuse and taking to Facebook to raise awareness. Won't you join me? What are you doing to commemorate **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day?** **Building Strong Support for Elders.** United against elder abuse. **#WEAAD.***
- *Do you know someone who has been the victim of elder abuse? It happens more often than you think. In fact, approximately 1 in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. One study estimated that only 1 in 14 cases of abuse are reported to authorities. Do you have a story? Share it to help raise awareness about abuse and help prevent abuse from happening to others. **#WEAAD.***
- *Did you know that neglect is the most common form of elder abuse? **#WEAAD2024***
- *Every year 5 million elders are abused in the United States alone. It doesn't have to be this way. There are many ways to make a difference.*

**Check on the older adults in your family and community. Call the Adult Protective Services Hotline at 1-800-652-1999 if you suspect abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult. #WEAAD**

- *Curious to know what people are doing to commemorate **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**?*
  - **Give a caregiver a couple of hours off**
  - **Talk to your friends about elder abuse**
  - **One person can make a difference**
  - **Be an advocate for one day and help protect vulnerable adults. #WEAAD**

### Honor Advocates with Awards

In most years, we suggest organizing an awards ceremony or awards dinner for **WEAAD**. We believe that **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** is the perfect time for a social gathering. Seek out individuals or groups of people who have worked to raise awareness of abuse that occurs in later life and present them with an award. Honorees should be people who have worked to ensure fair treatment of older people in your community or at your workplace. Some examples are people who:

- Build bridges between individuals and organizations so they have a better understanding of abuse and neglect in later life
- Work with an ethnic group on abuse issues affecting older adults in the community
- Work to meet cultural food needs of ethnic seniors in a congregate setting
- Reduce the use of physical or chemical restraints in nursing homes
- Bridge the generation gap between older adults and young people
- Educate the community about elder abuse
- Make your award a tradition every year on—or near—June 15<sup>th</sup>, **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**. The individuals who receive this award should be given a certificate acknowledging their contribution to the community.
- Present the award at a special meal or ceremony that the community is invited to attend. The presenter will take the opportunity to elaborate on preventing abuse and neglect in later life and how to recognize and report elder abuse.
- A ZOOM celebration can also honor special people if an in-person meeting is not possible.

### Have the Civil Authority Make a Proclamation

Request that the mayor or county commissioners in your area sign a proclamation declaring June 15<sup>th</sup> **Elder Abuse Awareness Day** or during **WEAAD Week is June 12th – 16th** and urge citizens to participate in your event.

- Take your agency's officials with you when the proclamation is signed and **invite the news media** to cover the event to raise awareness. Be prepared to speak on the

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abuse of vulnerable adults and provide the toll-free Nebraska Abuse and Neglect Hotline phone number: **800-652-1999**.

- Following is a sample proclamation:

*WHEREAS: (Community)'s seniors are valued members of society, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they live safely and with dignity.*

*WHEREAS: Abuse of older people is a tragedy inflicted on vulnerable seniors and an ever-increasing problem in society that crosses all socio-economic boundaries.*

*WHEREAS: Combating abuse of older people will improve the quality of life for all seniors across this state and country and will allow seniors to continue to live as independently as possible and contribute to the life and vibrancy of (Community).*

*WHEREAS: (Community)'s seniors are guaranteed they will be treated with respect and dignity to enable them to continue to serve as leaders, mentors, volunteers, and important and active members of this community.*

*WHEREAS: We are all responsible for building safer communities for (Community)'s seniors.*

*WHEREAS: The well-being of (Community)'s seniors is in the interest of all and further adds to the well-being of Nebraska communities.*

*WHEREAS: (Agency name) will hold (event) on (date, time & location) in observance of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and the citizens of (Community) are invited to attend.*

*I, Mayor of (Community), do hereby proclaim June 15th, (year), as Elder Abuse Awareness Day and encourage all (Community) residents to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of (Community)'s seniors.*

*Dated on this (date) day of (month), (year).*

*Signed: (Space to sign), Mayor*

#### Hold Other Promotional Efforts

- DHHS will post resources on the document library found at: [www.dhhs.ne.gov/weaad](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/weaad)
- Prepare your own materials:
  - Provide a list of local resources and information about elder abuse and neglect.
  - Develop an informational brochure listing available services in your area for anyone affected by abuse and neglect.
  - Ask a group to make purple ribbons to distribute to people to wear during **WEAAD Week** June 12th – 16th and encourage everyone to wear purple in recognition of **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**.
- Post information about your event on community bulletin boards and kiosks, in stores, on your local cable TV community channel, local commercial TV station, public radio station, time and temperature signs, community websites, etc.
- Send invitations to your events via email and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

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- Contact local law enforcement to distribute information during Neighborhood Watch meetings.
- Request other organizations, especially those serving seniors, to distribute information about your event, information about preventing abuse and neglect in later life and how to recognize and report elder abuse.
- Submit information to organizations and agencies so it can be used for the June edition of their newsletter or other communications. (Contact groups: domestic violence advocates, health care and assisted living associations, AARP, etc.)
- Distribute materials to places where seniors gather: Meals on Wheels, doctors' offices, banks, beauty salons, rural health centers, housing authorities, and others.
- Request that civic buildings in your community, be illuminated in **PURPLE** for **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day!**

### World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

#### Talking Points for Community Presentations

##### Target audiences:

- Veterans' groups such as the American Legion and VFW, including their auxiliary members
- Ministerial associations
- Civic groups: Sertoma, Optimist, Rotary, Kiwanis, and others

##### Elder Abuse

In Nebraska last year, **Adult Protective Services investigated 3,608 allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation** of vulnerable adults. This is 1,322 more than in 2022 and 15 more than in 2021. There were 348 unique victims aged 60 and older, an increase of 78 over 2022. One-hundred-thirteen Nebraskans aged 60 and older were found to have been abused, neglected, or exploited in 2023. Another 251 individuals over age 60 were confirmed as victims of self-neglect, which is 30 more than in 2022. **Self-neglect** means that due to physical impairments or diminished capacity, an adult is unable to care for him or herself or obtain essential services—such as appropriate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care—or lacks proper supervision. Self-neglect may result in physical injury, imminent danger of physical injury or even death.

There were over 1,100 more APS-related calls to the Nebraska Child & Adult Abuse and Neglect Hotline in 2023 than in 2022. Still, we know that vulnerable adult abuse goes largely unreported. One study estimated that only one in 24 cases of abuse is reported to authorities (NCOA, 2021).

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Why does abuse remain such an “invisible” problem? Many victims are isolated, ashamed, or embarrassed, particularly if a family member is the abuser, which is often the case. These adults are older, frail, and vulnerable, cannot help themselves and depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Abusers of older adults are both women and men. They are family members, friends, or “trusted others.” Of 164 unique perpetrators, 75 were determined to be relatives of the victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Elders are often afraid to report for fear that the abuse will get worse or that they will have no one to care for them.

**In Nebraska** in 2023, Neglect was the most common reason an APS report was made to the Abuse and Neglect Hotline and resulted in 1,577 investigations. Self-neglect (1,784 investigations) and financial exploitation (831 investigations) were the second and third most common allegations that Adult Protective Services workers investigated.

Elder abuse tends to take place where the senior lives: frequently in the home where abusers are often adult children, other family members such as grandchildren, or the spouses and partners of elders. Elder abuse can also occur in institutional settings, especially in long-term care facilities.

**In Nebraska:** Statistics from the 2020 United States Census indicated that the population of older Nebraskans (65 years old plus) was 317,763 (16.2 percent of the total Nebraska population). The 2022 population of Nebraska according to the website <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NE> is estimated to be 1,978,379, with 334,346 aged 65 or older, or 16.9% of the total population. This represents an increase of 11,607 in the past 12 months. By 2030, Nebraska’s total population is projected to be 1,995,774 and the projected population of Nebraskans aged 65 and over will be 420,000 (21%). By that year, as many as 1 in 5 Nebraskans will likely be elderly.

The “oldest old”—those aged 85 and over—are the most rapidly growing elderly age group. With these statistics and projections, the U.S. should be preparing for the many changes that will accompany this explosion in the older population.

**Financial exploitation is a growing concern.** According to the results of the study *Old Age and Decline in Financial Literacy*, completed by the Texas Tech University, financial literacy declines by about 1% each year after age 60. However, an individual's *confidence* in financial decision-making abilities does **not** decline with age.

In **Nebraska**, 2,935 allegations of financial exploitation were reported in 2023. Eight hundred thirty-one cases were investigated. 94 of these cases resulted in substantiated findings.

**Cognitive Impairments:** No one is immune to Alzheimer's, and there is no known preventive measure. The cause is still not known, but risk increases dramatically with age. Alzheimer’s is almost unheard of in people aged 20-39. It is very uncommon (about 1 in 2,500) for people aged 40-59. In the 60s, the odds become more worrisome.



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An estimated 1% of 65-year-olds have Alzheimer's or a closely related dementia. The percentages increase with age:

- 2% of 68-year-olds
- 3% of 70-year-olds
- 6% of 73-year-olds
- 9% of 75-year-olds
- 13% of 77-year-olds

The risk continues to accelerate with age, to the point where dementia affects nearly half of those 85 and over. But for elders without dementia, mild cognitive impairment affects approximately 22% of those aged 71 and older.

### Risk Factors

Although there is never an excuse for mistreatment of an elderly person, several factors appear to influence whether elders are at an increased risk for abuse:

- **Social isolation:** the elder and caregiver are alone together almost all the time
- The **intensity** of an elderly person's **illness or dementia**
- The elder's role at an earlier time as an **abusive parent or spouse**
- A history of **domestic violence** in the home
- The elder's own tendency toward **verbal or physical aggression**

### Preventing elder abuse and neglect

How to prevent elder abuse:

- Listen to seniors and their caregivers.
- Intervene when you suspect elder abuse: call the **APS hotline at 1-800-652-1999**.
- Watch for warning signs that might indicate elder abuse.
- If you suspect abuse, **report it**.
- Look at the elder's medications. Does the amount in the vial jive with the date of the prescription?
- Watch for possible financial abuse. Ask the elder if you may look over bank accounts and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions.
- Call and visit as often as you can. Help the elder consider you a trusted confidante.
- Offer to stay with the elder so the caregiver can have a break on a regular basis.

### Indicators of the various types of mistreatment:

#### Physical abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury, such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically, i.e., on both sides of the body
- Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations
- Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (for example, the elder's prescription has more medicine remaining than it should)

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- Broken eyeglasses or frames
- Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists, ankles or chest area
- Caregiver's refusal to allow you to see the elder alone

### Sexual abuse

- Bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained sexually transmitted disease or genital infections
- Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

### Neglect by caregivers or self-neglect

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores
- Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes
- Being left dirty or unbathed
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, or other fire hazards)
- Deserting the elder at a public place

### Financial exploitation

#### The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) identified the following Top 10 Consumer Complaints from Nebraska in 2023:

1. [Imposter Scams](#), Romance Scams, Fake Debt Collectors
2. [Identity Theft](#)
3. Credit Bureaus, Information Furnishers & Report Users
4. Online Shopping and Negative Reviews
5. [Prizes, Sweepstakes & Lotteries](#)
6. Banks & Lenders
7. [Auto Related Complaints](#), Car Cloning, Salvage Title Fraud
8. [Health Care](#), Affordable Care Act Imposters, Discount Drug & Medical Plans, Healthcare Open Enrollment, Medicare Fraud, Medical ID Theft, and Miracle health Products
9. Internet Services
10. Debt Collection

#### The FTC highlights the following scams from 2023:

- [Investment scams](#) were huge, with reported losses of \$3.8 billion. That's more than people lost to any other scam, and more than double the loss reported in 2021.
- [Impersonator scams](#) were still the most-reported scam, with reported losses of \$2.6 billion. The difference this year? Higher losses to business imposters: 2022 losses were \$660 million, compared to \$453 million in 2021.
- If people paid a scammer, the biggest reported losses were through bank transfers (\$1.5 billion reported lost to scams) and [cryptocurrency](#) (\$1.4 billion reported lost).
- When the scam started on social media, people reported losing the most money overall to scammers (\$1.2 billion). **But when the scammer called, the per-person loss was the highest (\$1,400 median loss).**
- Younger adults (ages 20-29) reported losing money more often than older adults (ages 70-79). **But when older adults did lose money, they lost more than anyone else.**

### Signs of Financial Exploitation:

- Significant withdrawals from the elder's accounts
- Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition

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- Items or cash missing from the senior’s household
- Suspicious changes in wills, powers of attorney, titles, and policies
- Addition of names to the senior’s bank account signature card
- Unpaid bills or lack of medical care, although the elder has enough money to pay for them
- Financial activity the senior could not have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden or does not leave the house
- Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions

**Nebraska Attorney General's Office**

<https://protectthegoodlife.nebraska.gov/protecting-nebraskas-seniors>

**2023 Top 10 Consumer Complaints**

1. Imposter Scams
2. Home Repairs & Improvements
3. Auto-related Complaints
4. Online Shopping
5. Health Care
6. Telephone and Mobile Services
7. Internet Services
8. Identity Theft
9. Travel, Vacations & Time-share Plans
10. Debt Collection

**Healthcare fraud and abuse**

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of over-medication or under-medication
- Evidence of inadequate care even though the elder’s bills are paid in full
- Problems with the care facility: poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff; crowding; inadequate responses to questions about the elder’s care

**What you can do when someone shares that they are a victim:**

**Response: Compassion and Referral**

- Listen with empathy and without judgment.
- Affirm the victim’s right to safety. Affirm that **safety is your first concern.**
- Reassure the victim that the **abuse is NOT their fault.**
- If your conversation is confidential or privileged, remind your client of that fact and that you will not act without their permission.
- Help the victim connect to a domestic violence, sexual assault / elder abuse advocate or to Adult Protective Services.

**202 Top Frauds**

**Federal Trade Commission**

- Imposter Scams
- Online Shopping Scams
- Prizes, Sweepstakes & Lotteries
- Investment Scams
- Business & Job Opportunities

Addressing elder abuse takes coordination of many entities such as:

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- Religious Leaders
- Advocates
- Police
- Adult Protective Services
- Health Professionals
- Friends
- Policy Makers
- Judges and Legal Professionals
- Educators
- Financial Institutions
- Community Members

The FTC received fraud reports from more than 2.6 million consumers last year compared to 2.4 million in 2022. (FTC, 2023)

- The number of reports is down, BUT
- The amount lost is UP \$10 billion lost in 2023 compared to \$8.8 in 2022

**Types of Interventions and Resources for Elders:  
Domestic & Sexual Violence Programs**

- 24-hour crisis lines
- Emergency housing
- Individual, peer, and group counseling
- Legal advocacy
- Community education
- Safety planning
- An individualized set of strategies designed to maximize the safety of a person who may be in danger of further harm from a perpetrator.
  - Includes physical, emotional, and financial safety
  - Does not require a victim to leave
  - Should be constantly evolving

**How Scammers Contact Consumers:**

- Email
- Phone Calls
- Text Messages

**Adult Protective Services                      1-800-652-1999**

- Investigates reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults, including older adults who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- Arranges services to make adults safe and to allow the most personal freedom possible
- Seeks alternate decision-maker for adults who have been abused, neglected, or exploited and who are unable to make decisions for themselves and have no family or friends to help them
- Offers safety planning

Nebraska has a mandatory reporting law for persons who are in the medical, mental health, and developmental disabilities fields, as well as for any other human services provider.

**Aging Network to Support Elders in their Communities**

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- Transportation
- Meals
- Home health
- Social programs
- Assistance with benefits

*Find out about the  
resources in your area!*

**Legal**

Any civil legal services organization can assist an eligible victim regardless of age

- However, many communities also have elder-specific legal services programs
- Elder law expertise may or may not be necessary

Some civil remedies:

- Civil protection order
- Divorce
- Power of Attorney

Some criminal charges:

- Assault
- Fraud
- Confinement

**Legal Services & Elder Rights**

The Legal Assistance program is a partnership between the Area Agencies on Aging and Legal Aid of Nebraska. The goal is to help older Nebraskans keep their independence and support their well-being. It's also important to protect the rights of older adults.

Call the ElderAccess Line®:

Omaha (402) 827-5656 or

Statewide (800) 527-7249

Visit: <http://www.legalaidofnebraska.org/>