



By Marci Phillips | 6.7.2018

Shining a Spotlight on Elder Abuse

June 15 is [World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#) — an important annual event that spotlights a devastating daily occurrence for millions of older adults.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), about 1 in 6 older people experienced some form of abuse in the past year.

Too often, [elder abuse](#) goes unreported and untreated. One study estimated that [only 1 in 14](#) cases of abuse are reported to authorities.

Often this is because the abuse is hidden or it is coming from someone close to the older adult. In almost 58% of elder abuse and neglect incidents, the perpetrator is a family member, according to the [National Center on Elder Abuse](#). Most are adult children or spouses.

Elder abuse does not always show up as bumps and bruises. It can many other forms that are just as damaging. Examples include:

Physical abuse: Inflicting physical pain or injury upon an older adult.

Sexual abuse: Touching, fondling, intercourse, or any other sexual activity with an older adult, when the older adult is unable to understand, unwilling to consent, threatened, or physically forced.

Emotional abuse: Verbal assaults, threats of abuse, harassment, or intimidation.

Confinement: Restraining or isolating an older adult, other than for medical reasons.

Passive neglect: A caregiver's failure to provide an older adult with life's necessities, including, but not limited to, food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

Willful deprivation: Denying an older adult medication, medical care, shelter, food, a therapeutic device, or other physical assistance, and exposing that person to the risk of physical, mental, or emotional harm—except when the older, competent adult has expressed a desire to go without such care.

Financial exploitation: The misuse or withholding of an older adult's resources by another.

Social isolation and mental impairment (such as **dementia or Alzheimer's disease**) are two factors that make older adults susceptible 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.

This month, and every month, you can play a role in educating others about recognizing, preventing, and treating elder abuse. The U.S. Center on Elder Mistreatment offers several ways to **get involved**.