



## Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

The safety measures put in place to protect older adults and adults with disabilities from COVID-19, unfortunately, also put them at a greater risk for abuse, neglect, exploitation and self-neglect.

Because of the pandemic, adult children may have returned to their parent's home due to job loss which may be causing emotional and financial strain. Older adults and persons with disabilities may be living with a spouse or other loved one who suffers from alcohol and/or drug addiction and feel they have no way to escape the situation. An older adult or adult with a disability may rely on the care of others to assist them with living in the home. Caregivers are experiencing higher levels of exhaustion and burn out due to lack of formal assistance like adult day services and in-home care. Some caregivers have opted to stop in-home assistance to protect their loved one from COVID-19 and as a result, they are providing around the clock care. Due to the Shelter in Place order, it is hard for an older adult, person with a disability, or caregiver to seek relief or refuge from difficult situations that may be heightened during this crisis.

Now, more than ever, we need to check in on older adults and adults with disabilities who might be at risk of abuse.

### **What is adult abuse?**

Adult abuse is a term that refers to the following types of mistreatment to any Illinois resident age 18-59 with a disability and any adult 60 years of age or older who lives in a domestic setting.

- Abuse means physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or willful confinement.
- Neglect means the failure of a caregiver to provide an adult with the necessities of life, including, but not limited to food, clothing, shelter or medical care. Neglect may be either passive (non-malicious) or willful.
- Financial exploitation means the misuse or withholding of an adult's resources by another to the disadvantage of the adult or the profit of another.
- Self-Neglect is a condition that is the result of an adult's inability, due to physical or mental impairments, or both, or a diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks that substantially threaten their own health, including: providing appropriate food, clothing, shelter, and health care, as well as obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and general safety.

Abuse can happen to any older adult or adult with a disability caused by a loved one or anyone with an ongoing relationship with the individual. Abuse can happen at home, at a relative's home, or in a long-term care facility.

### **What are some signs of abuse?**

- If the person seems withdrawn from normal activities, depressed, or confused
- If the person is isolated from friends and family (more so than with the current Stay at Home order)
- If the person has unexplained bruises, burns, broken bones or scars

- If the person appears dirty, underfed, dehydrated, over or under medicated, or not receiving needed care for medical problems
- If the person has bed sores or other preventable conditions
- If the person has experienced recent changes in banking or spending patterns
- If the person has strained or tense relationships, frequent arguments between the caregiver and older adult

### **How can abuse be prevented?**

Educating older adults, adults with disabilities, professionals, caregivers, and the public on abuse is critical to prevention. On an individual level, use some simple, but vital steps to reduce the risk:

- Take care of your health
- Seek professional help for drug, alcohol and depression concerns, and urge family members to get help for these problems
- Attend virtual support groups for caregivers and learn about domestic violence services
- Plan for your own future. With a power of attorney or a living will, health care decisions can be addressed to avoid confusion and family problems, should you become incapacitated. Seek independent advice from someone you trust before signing any legal documents or advanced directives
- Stay active in the community and connected with friends and family. This will decrease social isolation, which has been connected to abuse
- Know your rights. If you engage the services of a paid or family caregiver, you have the right to voice your preferences and concerns

### **Who do I call if I suspect abuse or neglect in a long-term care setting?**

- If you or a loved one live in a Nursing Home or Assisted Living, call your Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Provider Agency. The Ombudsman is your advocate and has the power to intervene.

### **AgeOptions' Long-Term Care Ombudsman Provider Agencies**

#### **Suburban Cook County (Except the City of Evanston)**

Legal Aid Chicago  
(888) 401-8200  
[Ombudsman@legalaidchicago.org](mailto:Ombudsman@legalaidchicago.org)

#### **City of Evanston**

City of Evanston Senior Services  
(847) 488-8696  
[Ombudsman@cityofevanston.org](mailto:Ombudsman@cityofevanston.org)

### **Who do I call if I suspect abuse, neglect, exploitation or self-neglect in a domestic setting?**

***Call 911 immediately if someone is in immediate, life-threatening danger.***

If the danger is not immediate, but you suspect that abuse has occurred or is occurring, please tell someone. Relay your concerns to the local Adult Protective Services Provider Agency, Long-Term Care Ombudsman (for nursing homes/assisted living), or your local law enforcement agency.

### **AgeOptions' Adult Protective Services Provider Agencies**

#### **Barrington, Hanover, Palatine and Wheeling Townships**

Catholic Charities (Northwest Senior Services)  
(847) 253-5500  
<http://www.catholiccharities.net/>

**Berwyn, Cicero and Villages of Proviso Townships**

Solutions for Care

(708) 447-2448

<https://solutionsforcare.org/>

**Bloom, Bremen, Calumet, Rich and Thornton Townships**

Catholic Charities (South Suburban Senior Services)

(708) 596-2222

<http://www.catholiccharities.net/>

**Elk Grove and Schaumburg Townships**

Kenneth W. Young Center

(847) 524-8800

<https://www.kennethyoung.org/>

**City of Evanston and Niles Township**

Metropolitan Family Services

(847) 425-7500

<https://www.metrofamily.org/>

**Lemont, Orland, Palos and Worth Townships**

PLOWS Council on Aging

(708) 361-0219

<https://www.plows.org/>

**Leyden, Lyons and Norwood Park and Riverside Townships****Villages of LaGrange Park, Brookfield, North Riverside and Northlake in Proviso Township**

Aging Care Connections

(708) 354-1323

<http://agingcareconnections.org/>

**Maine, New Trier and Northfield Townships**

North Shore Senior Center

(847) 784-6000

<https://www.nssc.org/>

**Oak Park and River Forest Townships**

Oak Park Township

(708) 383-8060

<https://oakparktownship.org/>

**Stickney Township**

Stickney Township Office on Aging

(708) 636-8850

<http://www.townshipofstickney.org/>

\*If you are unsure which Adult Protective Services Provider Agency serves the area in which the older adult or adult with disabilities lives, please visit the AgeOptions Referral Page at <https://services.ageoptions.org/>, select "Adult Protective Services" and enter the adults address.

\*If you are trying to report abuse after business hours, please call the Illinois Department on Aging 24-hour Adult Protective Services Hotline: (866) 800-1409, (888) 206-1327 (TTY)

*AgeOptions would like to thank AgeGuide, the original author of this resource, for consenting to this resource being adapted to include vital information to meet the needs of community members within Suburban Cook County.*