

ELDER/ADULT ABUSE COMPONENT
SAFEGUARDING ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN PROGRAM

PROGRAM OUTLINE BY: HELEN HUNTER, ACSW, CMSW
INDEPENDENT GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER CONSULTANT/TRAINER
LAY PASTORAL MINISTER

- I. **Statistics** - Numbers of adults/elderly growing in Florida and across the nation.
Expected to continue growth in the next 20-30 years as the baby-boomer generation ages.

- II. **Community Resources to help family caregivers**
There is a lack of available formal (community) resources.
Money is not always available to provide assistance.
Families get overwhelmed with providing daily care

- III. **What kinds of abuse do we see?**
Show excerpts from video tape "I Grow Old"
List types of abuse and discuss in detail:
 - Physical
 - Psychological/emotional/verbal
 - Financial Sexual
 - Self –neglect
 - Passive neglect
 - Active neglect
 - Exploitation

- IV. **How can we as the church help our adult/elder members prevent becoming victims of abuse?**
List and discuss

- V. **How can we educate families/adults and elders to get the help they need so that abuse doesn't occur?**
List and discuss

- VI. **Give abuse hotline#. Discuss reporting responsibility.**
Questions from class participants.

ELDER ABUSE
BY: HELEN HUNTER, ACSW, CMSW

As the older population continues to grow, there is increasing evidence of mistreatment, or abuse, against the elderly, from family members, caregivers, or others who tend to the needs of those who are most vulnerable. There are several ways in which an older person can be abused.

These include:

SELF -NEGLECT -This occurs when a person is neglected in terms of their personal care, their finances, their property and their conduct. If not attended to, this pattern can lead to potentially life-threatening situations. Often, the older person cannot care for themselves adequately but refuses outside help. In other cases, the person is competent, but refuses to conform to "societal" standards for proper maintenance in a number of areas.

PASSIVE NEGLECT -This is the unintentional failure to fulfill a care-giving obligation where there is no conscious or willful attempt to inflict physical or emotional distress on the older person. For example, a caregiver can be unaware of services available to assist in the older person's care.

ACTIVE NEGLECT -This is the intentional failure to fulfill a care-giving obligation, including a conscious and willful attempt to inflict physical or emotional stress or injury on the older person. Examples of this include deliberate abandonment, deliberate denial of food or health-related services, depriving of dentures or eyeglasses, etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE -This is the infliction of mental anguish. Examples of this include name calling, treating the person as a child, insults, ignoring the person, frightening or threatening them, and isolating them from others.

MATERIAL OR FINANCIAL ABUSE -This is the illegal or unethical exploitation of funds, property, or other assets belonging to the older person.

PHYSICAL ABUSE -This is the infliction of physical pain or injury, physical coercion or confinement against one's will. Examples of this include: slapping, bruising, cutting, burning, physically restraining, pushing, and shoving.

SEXUAL ABUSE -This is where a perpetrator forces an elder to be involved in sexual activity which is not consensual. Pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in the genital area can occur, and the victim often has difficulty with walking or sitting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT YOURSELF FROM BECOMING A VICTIM OF ELDER ABUSE?

- Remain sociable as you age -maintain and possibly increase your social network and activities.
- Develop a "buddy system" with friends or neighbors. Plan to call or visit each other a few times per week.
- Keep regular medical, dental, barber, hairdresser and other personal appointments. These professionals can be very helpful if the situation arises. Ask your friends to visit where you live, even for brief periods of time.
- Have your own telephone and post and open your own mail. If your mail is being intercepted, discuss alternatives with your postal carrier.
- Keep your belongings neat and orderly and store things in a regular place. Make others aware that you know where everything is supposed to be.

DON'T :

- Voluntarily give up control over your property or assets until you determine that you cannot manage.
- Leave cash, jewelry, or personally-prized possessions lying around.
- Accept personal care in return for transfer or assignment of your property without consulting a lawyer or other advocate.
- Lose contact with old friends and neighbors if you must move into a relative's home or other living arrangement.
- Allow anyone else to keep details of your finances or property management from you.

WHAT CAN THE FAMILY DO TO PREVENT ABUSE OF THEIR OLDER RELATIVES ?

- Maintain close ties with older relatives or friends. Keep abreast of changes in their health situation, as well as their ability to live independently.
- Anticipate potential care giving by planning, as a family, who will accept certain responsibilities in the event that the older relative needs care.
- Become familiar with the person's financial records, bank accounts, wills, safe deposit boxes and insurance before he/she needs care. Plan together how these things should be handled at the time when the older person is no longer able to.
- Explore the older person's wishes for health care and the various services available in the community.
- Closely examine your own abilities in providing long-term care to an older person. What are your physical limits? Who else will be available to assist in the care of that person?
- Become familiar with services available in the community.
- Plan for your own needs -remember to "take a break" once in a while, or you will become a burnout victim and may need care yourself!
- Discuss your plans with friends, neighbors and other sources of support before the responsibilities become a burden. Ask for their understanding and emotional support when you need it.
- Examine the physical realities of the home and property and make necessary changes to insure the maximum level of independence for your older relative.

DON'T :

- Accept or offer personal home care unless you fully understand the responsibilities involved.
- Assume that poor interpersonal relationships will disappear -they won't!
- Expect irritating problems or habits to disappear once you become the main care-giver.
- Expect to do it all. You are not "Superhuman". Find sources of help and use them.
- Label yourself as a failure if home care is no longer a viable alternative.

Remember, older people who are victims of abuse are often the least able to advocate for their own rights. With greater understanding of elder abuse, families and others involved in the lives of an older person can serve as an advocate.

Signs of Abuse:

Physical signs may include cuts, puncture wounds, burns, bruises, welts, dehydration or malnutrition, poor coloration, sunken eyes or cheeks, soiled clothing or bed, lack of necessities such as food, water or utilities.

Behavioral Signs of Abuse:

Behavioral signs may include fear, anxiety, agitation, anger, isolation, withdrawal, depression, non-responsiveness, resignation, ambivalence, contradictory statements, implausible stories, hesitation to talk openly, confusion or disorientation.

Florida has the highest proportion of older residents to younger ones in the U.S.

(Vinton, 2000)

Florida ranks 4th in the U.S. in the number of elderly citizens, with 3,568,004 age 60 and over.

Florida Reports Received 1999-2000	
Department of Children and Families (DCF)	
Abuse 17,161	25.8%
Neglect 23,040	34.7%
Exploitation 7,204	10.9%
Neglect not caused by a second party 18,983	28.6%
Total 66,388	

Jeb Bush, Governor
Carole Green, Secretary
State of Florida
Department of Elder Affairs
4040 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, Florida
32399-7000
(850) 414-2000

What is Abuse?



Physical Abuse:	Pushing, striking, slapping, kicking, pinching, restraining, shaking, beating, burning, hitting, shoving or other acts that can cause harm to an elder.
Emotional or Psychological Abuse:	Verbal berating, harassment, intimidation, threats of punishment or deprivation, criticism, demeaning comments, coercive behavior or isolation from family and friends.
Financial or Material Exploitation:	Improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets, cashing checks without permission, forging signatures, coercing or deceiving an older person into signing a document, using an ATM/debit card without permission.
Sexual Abuse:	The nonconsensual sexual contact of any kind, including assault or battery, rape, sodomy, coerced nudity or sexually explicit photographing.
Self-neglect:	When individuals fail to provide themselves with whatever is necessary to prevent physical or emotional harm or pain.

**Elders have
the right not
to be yelled
at, and not
to be
threatened.**



**Elders have
the right to
control their
finances and
property.**

Contacts

**Contact Elder Abuse Hotline:
(24 hour)**

1-800-96-ABUSE (962-2873)

**Domestic Violence Hotline:
(24 hour)** 1-800-500-1119

Elder Helpline: 1-800-96-ELDER
(1-800-963-5337)

**To Report Fraud:
(Comptroller's Office)**

1-800-848-3792

To Report Insurance Fraud:
1-800-378-0445

For Legal Assistance:
1-800-342-8011

**Long- Term Care Ombudsman:
(for those in nursing homes and
assisted living facilities)**

1-888-831-0404

Consumer Services Division:
1-800-432-7352

Banking and Finance:
1-800-848-3792

**National Fraud Information
Center:**

1-800-876-7060

Emergency Service: 911

**Adapted from *Strategies for Helping Victims of Elder Mistreatment*
by Risa Brackman and Ron Adelman**

<p>PHYSICAL ABUSE Unexplained injuries or explanation inconsistent with medical findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fractures ▪ Welts ▪ Lacerations ▪ Punctures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Burns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unusual location, type or shape similar to an object. (e.g. iron cigarette burn.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bruises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presence of old and new. - Shape similar to an object.
<p>SEXUAL ABUSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Torn, stained or bloody underclothing ▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pain, itching, bruising, or bleeding in genital area ▪ Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections 	
<p>PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confusion ▪ Excessive fears ▪ Insomnia, sleep deprivation, or need for excessive sleep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in appetite ▪ Unusual weight gain or loss ▪ Loss of interest in self, activities, or environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ambivalence ▪ Resignation ▪ Withdrawal ▪ Agitation
<p>FINANCIAL/MATERIAL ABUSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inaccurate, confused, or no knowledge of finances ▪ Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills, purchase food or personal care items. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disparity between income/assets and lifestyle ▪ Fear or anxiety when discussing finances ▪ Unprecedented transfer of assets from an older person to other(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of receptivity by older person or family member to any necessary assistance requiring expenditure, when finances are not a problem ▪ Extraordinary interest by family member in older person's assets
<p>NEGLECT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dehydration ▪ Malnutrition ▪ Hypo/Hyperthermia ▪ Excessive dirt or odor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inadequate or inappropriate clothing ▪ Absence of eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, or prostheses ▪ Unexpected or unexplained deterioration of health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decubitus ulcers (“bedsores”) ▪ Signs of excess drugging, lack of medication, or other misuse (e.g. decreased alertness, responsiveness, and orientation.)

Domestic violence in older people

It could be your mother aunt or an elderly neighbor couple that you suspect is being abused. Domestic violence can happen in any family not only affecting the young. It includes not only physical violence, but verbal, emotional, and financial abuse as well.

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior used by the abuser to exercise power and control over the victim. This abuse can happen at any age but when committed on an elderly person over 65, the crime automatically becomes a felony. Domestic violence in the elderly differs from elder abuse in that it occurs at the hands of a spouse, companion or adult child rather than an unrelated caregiver or as an act of random violence. It may be committed against an adult who is physically and mentally healthy or one who is ill or frail. Domestic violence can begin in early marriage or start many years into the relationship.

Barbara, not her real name, always thought she had plenty of time to get out on her own and continue with a happy life. She had been physically and emotionally abused for many years by her husband and had left him several times to start a new life, but always went back. The last time she went back home to take care of him after he had a stroke. He continued his verbal abuse of her and she died with a massive heart attack before she could ever achieve her dream of a life lived in peace.

Regardless of what category elder abuse or domestic violence falls in, it is not right and it is not the fault of the victim. The bottom line is that no one deserves to be hurt. Domestic violence includes a wide variety of behaviors used by individuals to exert power and control over their intimate partners or former partners. In cases of elder domestic violence, perpetrators are often children and caregivers of the victim.

Domestic violence includes physical and sexual related incidences, which are criminal and can be reported to police and prosecuted in the courts. But not all abuse is physical. Abuse includes psychological, emotional abuse, economic/financial abuse, legal abuse, threats to and about children, using "male privilege," intimidation, isolation, coercion, financial control and many other behaviors which, while not criminal acts, do reinforce control over the victim.

A possible reaction to suspected domestic violence might include fear of getting involved. People many times feel like they are interfering, but most likely your involvement will improve the quality of life of an elder person or actually save a life. Like the slogan, "friends don't let friends drive drunk," friends don't let friends be abused, or abuse, without trying to help. Often the elderly have their own reasons for not admitting, even to themselves, what is happening. "Johnny or Jane would never hurt me on purpose," says a mother with a broken arm, or a grandmother knocked out of her wheelchair by her grandson. "It was an accident. He would never do me any harm." "If so-and-so goes to jail, who will take care of me?" "We've been married 50 years. What would I do without him?"

So, how do you know what is abuse? Are you experiencing feelings of isolation, do you feel like you have no private space or time? Do you feel like you are being controlled and not allowed to make your own decisions?

Physical abuse may seem like the most obvious and easily spotted form of abuse but it may not be reported, or may be minimized. Pushing, slapping, pinching, and any other infliction of physical pain, along with any unexplained cuts or bruises are good indicators of serious problems.

Not tending to, or assisting with, an elder's personal hygiene may be neglect- as well as withholding or mismanagement of scheduled medications or doctor visits, taking walker, wheelchair, glasses or dentures; or taking advantage of an elder's confusion. To deny, or create long waits for food, heat, care, or medication -or to ignore safety recommendations -can also be criminal neglect.

Financial abuse comes in the form of loss of control of money, home or valuables. Financial exploitation could mean loss of control over retirement benefits: threat of loss or neglect of financial obligations; threats to cancel health insurance or taking valuables, house or investments.

Verbal, mental or emotional abuse takes the form of false accusations, ridiculing personal values, ritual beliefs, cultural traditions, humiliation, intimidation, harassment, insults, threats, use of silence, or profanity and name calling. Emotional abuse demeans, yells, degrades, blames, and withholds affection, and engages in behavior to make victim feel crazy.

An abuser may threaten to leave, divorce, commit suicide, or institutionalize the victim, or may threaten to abuse or actually kill pets or livestock to get the victim to do what he wants. The abuser may also display or threaten with weapons.

The good news is that there are many agencies available to help victims of domestic violence.

One such agency is CASA, whose services include a 24-hour Crisis Line, safe shelter, one-one outreach, law enforcement liaison, legal advocacy, community education training, volunteers and other specialized programs. All contacts with CASA are confidential.

Some numbers that may be helpful are:

CASA 24 Hour Hot Line, 727-898-3671

Florida Domestic Violence Hotline 1 (800) 500-1119

Police 911

The Senior Helpline, 727-576-1533

24-hour information and referral, 211

Elder abuse reports, 1 (800) 962-2873