

A Few Statistics

- ◆ In Massachusetts, an elder is legally defined as a person who is 60 or older.
- ◆ Female elders are abused at a higher rate than male elders.
- ◆ Those age 80 and older are abused and neglected at 2-3 times their proportion of the elderly population.
- ◆ In almost 90% of elder abuse cases, the perpetrator is a family member. In 2/3 of elder abuse cases, the perpetrator is either an adult child or a spouse.

Types of domestic violence in later life

- ◆ **Long-term:** A long-term abusive relationship continues to be abusive in later years. *Jane and Joe have been married for 50 years. Joe began abusing Jane shortly after their marriage and has continued to abuse her since then.*
- ◆ **Late onset abuse:** A long-term relationship becomes abusive in later years. *Sandra and Sid have been married for 50 years. In the last four years, Joe has become abusive to Jane.*
- ◆ **Reverse domestic violence:** A long term abusive relationship in which the perpetrator and victim reverse roles in later years. *Margaret and Mike have been married for 50 years. Joe was abusive to Jane throughout the first 40 years of their marriage. Joe is now frail and needs assistance. Jane has become abusive to Joe.*
- ◆ **New abusive relationship:** A new relationship between elders in which one party is abusive to the other. *Ellen and Ed are 65 and 70 years old. They started dating 3 months ago. He is abusive to her.*

If someone you know is experiencing emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, there *is* someone to talk to.

**Call NELCWIT's 24-hour
HOTLINE:
413-772-0806 Franklin County
—or—
1-888-249-0806 (V/TTY) Toll Free
*Free and Confidential,
24 hours/day, 7 days/week*
or come to our office
479 Main Street, Greenfield
9 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday**

**Resources for elder abuse:
Franklin County
Home Care Corporation,
413-773-5555
SAGE, Boston, 617-534-2380
National Center on Elder Abuse,
202-898-2586**



NELCWIT is funded by contracts with the Massachusetts Departments of Public Health, Department of Social Services, Executive Office of Public Safety, and Office of Victim Assistance; by the United Way of Franklin County; by the Haymarket People's Fund and other private foundations, and by



NELCWIT

NEW ENGLAND LEARNING CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and ELDERS ELDER ABUSE

**New England Learning Center for Women
in Transition**

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*All of our services are
free & confidential.*

At any age, the impact of abuse is profound.

- ◆ The victim may feel fear, isolation, shame, and physical and emotional pain.
- ◆ She or he may feel helpless, that there are no options.
- ◆ The victim may be dependent on the abuser and may love the abuser.

Elders face unique barriers to disclosing domestic violence.

Fears of revealing the abuse are very real and often very well founded.

Elder domestic violence victims, especially if frail or disabled, may:

- ◆ Fear being institutionalized or displaced from their homes
- ◆ Fear loss of independence
- ◆ Fear loss of benefits or health insurance
- ◆ Have limited economic options and resources
- ◆ Hold strong religious or cultural beliefs regarding marriage and family loyalty
- ◆ Have dilemmas about caretaking
- ◆ Believe that verbal, physical, and emotional abuse are normal parts of a relationship
- ◆ Feel uncomfortable asking for help
- ◆ Be unaware of services

Also elders who have been ridiculed or denied services in the past may not realize that more help is available now

Elder abuse can take many forms, including:

◆ Abuse or neglect based on dependency:

For example: Takes advantage of confusion.

◆ Emotional abuse:

For example: Yells, insults, or calls names. Degrades and blames the elder.

◆ Using family members:

For example: Misleads others about extent and nature of health conditions.

◆ Ridiculing values or spirituality:

For example: Makes fun of person's values or forbids religious or cultural traditions.

◆ Using privilege:

For example: Makes all major decisions even if elder is competent to make own decisions.

◆ Financial:

For example: Takes over accounts and bills or spends money without permission.

◆ Threatens or intimidates:

For example: Threatens to commit suicide or to leave, divorce, or institutionalize the elder.

◆ Physical violence:

For example: Hits, pinches, throws things, burns, chokes, or otherwise injures the elder.

◆ Sexual abuse:

For example: Is rough with intimate body parts during caregiving.

◆ Controlling behaviors:

For example: Denies assistance with bathing or cleaning.

Signs That A Person May be A Victim of Elder Abuse

- ◆ Repeated "accidental" injuries
- ◆ Appears isolated
- ◆ Indicates, acts, or hints at being afraid
- ◆ Considers or attempts suicide
- ◆ History of alcohol or drug abuse, including prescription drug abuse
- ◆ Presents as a "difficult" client or patient
- ◆ Has vague, chronic complaints
- ◆ Is unable to follow through on treatment plans or medical care, or misses appointments frequently
- ◆ Appears very depressed