



Elder Abuse

Resources for Older Adults in Miami-Dade County

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About Elder Abuse

No one wants to be abused. Sometimes it just happens suddenly. Sometimes it's been going on for a long time. Other times, you just don't know if there is anything you can do to stop it.



Abuse can happen to anyone, and it can take many forms.

- Abuse can be physical, if someone hits you, pushes or shoves you, or treats you roughly.
- Abuse can be psychological, if someone calls you names, harasses you, or threatens you.
- Abuse can be financial, if someone steals your personal belongings or uses your money as his or her own.

Unfortunately, the most common abusers are the people you should be able to trust, such as your spouse, family members, and caregivers. Abusers can also be strangers on the street or a nice young person who befriends you over the phone.

What You Should Know

Some precautions you can take to avoid becoming a victim of abuse:

Stay Sociable

- Maintain and increase your network of friends.
- Keep in contact with old friends and neighbors if you move to a new address.
- Have a "good buddy" you can talk to openly.
- Have friends come to visit you at home.

Stay Active

- Accept opportunities to do new things.
- Volunteer or join a group or organization.
- Have regular medical, dental, or beauty appointments.

Stay Organized

- Keep your belongings neat and orderly.
- Make sure others are aware that you know where you keep everything.
- Open and post your own mail.
- Arrange to have your Social Security or pension check deposited directly to your bank account rather than mailed.
- Use an answering machine to screen your phone calls.

Stay Informed

- Talk to a lawyer about arrangements, such as powers of attorney for health and finances, that you can make now for possible future disability.
- Get legal advice before making arrangements for someone to take care of you in exchange for your property, possessions, or money.
- Review your will periodically.
- Know where to go for help if you think you are being abused.
- Ask for help when you need it.

Some Don'ts

- Don't live with a person who has a background of violent behavior or alcohol or drug abuse.
- Don't leave your home unattended. Notify the police if you are going to be away for a long time.
- Don't leave cash, jewelry, or prized possessions lying about.
- Don't sign any document unless someone you trust has reviewed it.
- Don't allow anyone to keep from you the details of your finances or property management.

If you think you are being abused—in any way, by anyone—feel confident that you can get help. Some of the agencies in your community you can contact are:

- Adult protective services office. Many states have instituted a 24-hour, toll-free number for receiving reports of abuse. Calls are confidential. In Florida, the Elder Abuse Hotline number is 1-800-962-2873.
- State unit on aging or area agency on aging. The Elder Helpline phone number in Miami, Florida is 305-670-4357, TDD 305-670-7721.

The bottom line:

If you think you are being abused, there are many places to go for help.

- Law enforcement agencies such as police department, district attorney's office, sheriff's department. Miami-Dade Police Department Elder Abuse and Domestic Violence Units: 305-418-7200.
- State long-term care ombudsman's office (for help with situations related to nursing homes, assisted living facilities and adult family care homes. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council of North Dade: 305-626-6144. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Council of South Dade and Monroe Counties: 305-663-2085.

REPORTING ABUSE/NEGLECT/EXPLOITATION TO THE FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE

BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE:

1. Victim name, address or location, approximate age, race and sex;
2. Physical, mental or behavioral indications that the person is infirm or disabled;
3. Signs or indications of harm or injury, including a physical description if possible;
4. Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the victim, if possible. If the relationship is unknown, a report will still be taken if other reporting criteria are met.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE A REPORT:

▶ **TELEPHONE: 1 - 800 - 96ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) OR TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf): 1-800-453-5145**

▶ **FAX: 1 (800) 914-0004**

▶ **VOICE MAIL MESSAGE: 1 (800) 770-0953**

When lines are busy and you are unable to wait, you may leave the report information in the voice mailbox. It is extremely difficult for hotline counselors to attempt call-backs so **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU LISTEN CAREFULLY AND LEAVE COMPLETE INFORMATION AS REQUESTED ABOVE OR A REPORT MAY NOT BE TAKEN.** You have five minutes to leave the information.

NOTIFICATION OF REPORT:

- Telephone reporters will always be told prior to concluding your conversation, whether the information provided has been accepted as a report.