



# What you need to know about elder abuse

Do you know a senior citizen who is being abused or cheated? You can help by reporting suspected cases of abuse.

Abuse can happen to senior citizens of any age. Abuse can happen even if they have money and good health. But, it happens most to women over the age of 75 with mental or physical illness.



Usually the abuse is done by the person who takes care of them. Sometimes strangers also hurt or cheat senior citizens.

## How are senior citizens abused, neglected or cheated?

Abuse is:

- Physically hurting them or
- Forcing them to have sex or
- Making them feel bad about themselves or
- Locking them up or
- Being mean to them

Neglect is when a senior citizen does not have:

- The care they need or
- The food or drink they need or
- A safe, clean place to live



Cheating a senior citizen means:

- Taking their money or property or
- Selling them something that is not worth the money or
- Tricking them into giving up their money or property

## What are the signs a senior citizen is being abused, neglected or cheated?

A senior may be abused if he or she:

- Seems frightened or confused or
- Is uneasy talking or answering questions or
- Seems thin, tired or pale or
- Has bruises, swelling or other signs of injury or
- Is never seen outside the house or
- Is cared for by someone sick, mentally disabled or using drugs or alcohol or
- Is cared for by someone who doesn't like them or
- Is cared for by someone who needs their money or
- Lives in an unsafe house or
- Lives with more pets than they can clean up after or
- Stops paying rent or water, gas and light bills or
- Stops buying food or medicine



It also might be abuse if you hear unusual sounds from the home.

Most seniors don't tell if they are being abused. They may be ashamed or too sick to tell. Some are too afraid of their abuser to tell anyone. That is why it is **important for other people to report abuse.**



### **What if you think a senior citizen is being abused, neglected or cheated?**

You should report it right away to:

TN Dept. of Human Services  
Adult Protective Services

**1-888-277-8366**

**1-888-APS-TENN**

It's a free call.

Adult Protective Services will check to see if there is abuse, neglect or cheating. They will call the police if there is abuse. They help any adult age 18 or older.

You don't have to give your name when you call. You don't have to prove there is abuse.

**It's against the law to know about elder abuse and not report it.**

If you think there is abuse, always call Adult Protective Services at **1-888-277-8366**. It's a free call.

But a senior can also get help from Legal Aid by calling **1-800-238-1443**. It's a free call. Or an agency or someone who knows the senior can call for them.



### **How does Legal Aid help?**

- We will call or meet with the senior. We see if he or she wants our help.
- We will help them find the care or services they need.

### **What if the senior does not want our help?**

They have the right to say no. The only time a senior has to get help is if a judge says so.

This booklet has information about adult abuse laws in Tennessee. The laws on adult abuse are different in each state. This booklet does not take the place of advice from a lawyer. Each case is different and needs individual attention.



**Legal Aid Society**  
of Middle Tennessee & the Cumberland

Working Together. Doing Justice. Restoring Hope.

**1-800-238-1443**

It's a free call.

On the internet at **www.las.org**