

# DEFINING ABUSE

**Physical abuse-** inflicting physical pain or injury upon an adult.

**Sexual abuse-** touching, fondling or any other sexual activity with an adult, when the person is unable to understand, unwilling to consent, threatened or physically forced.

**Emotional abuse-** verbal assaults, threats of maltreatment, harassment or intimidation. Emotional abuse is often coupled with other forms of abuse.

**Confinement-** restraining or isolating an adult, other than for medical reasons.

**Passive neglect-** the caregiver’s failure to provide an adult with life’s necessities, including, but not limited to, food, clothing, shelter or medical care. No new affirmative duty of care is created.

**Willful deprivation-** deliberately denying an adult medication, medical care, shelter, food, a therapeutic device or other physical assistance, and thereby exposing that person to the risk of physical, mental or emotional harm — except when the dependent person has expressed an intent to forego such care.

**Financial exploitation-** the misuse or withholding of an adult’s resources by another, to the disadvantage of the adult and/or for the profit or advantage of someone else.

**Self Neglect-** A condition that is the result of an eligible adult’s inability, due to physical or mental impairments, or both, or a diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks that substantially threaten his or her own health, including: providing essential food, clothing shelter, and health care; and obtaining goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health, emotional well-being, and general safety. This can include compulsive hoarding which significantly impairs the performance of essential self-care tasks or otherwise substantially threatens life or safety.

**Abandonment-** the desertion or willful forsaking of an eligible adult ban individual responsible for the care and custody of that eligible adult when a reasonable person would continue to provide care and custody.

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 711 (TRS).

This material was developed by the Illinois Department on Aging and is partially based on Elder Abuse and Neglect: Causes, Diagnosis and Intervention, by Mary Joy Quinn, R.N., and Susan I. Tomita, M.S.W., and Inadequate Care of the Elderly by Terry T. Fulmer, Ph.D., R.N., and Terrance A. O’Malley, M.D.



# LAW ENFORCEMENT





# REPORTING ABUSE

Many people who live at home are at risk of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation by family members and others close to them. Victims of abuse are often isolated and may be afraid or unable to seek help for themselves. Law enforcement officers play a key role in responding to reports of abuse and in working with Adult Protective Services provider agencies on behalf of the victims. The shared goal of Adult Protective Services and law enforcement is to assure that the potential victims have a full range of legal and service alternatives available to them.

Under the authority of the Illinois Adult Protective Services Act (Public Act 98- 0049), the Illinois Department on Aging administers a statewide intervention program to respond to reports of alleged abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. Program components include investigation, case planning, advocacy, and referral.

The program places an emphasis on an individual’s right to self-determination; no decisions are made about an adult with capacity without that adult’s involvement and consent. Every effort is made to respect an individual’s choices including where to live. On some occasions, when individuals are unable to make decisions about their care, APS will work in the client’s best interest to reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation.

To make a report, call **1-866-800-1409** or the local Adult Protective Services provider agency.

## Reporting is mandatory for law enforcement officers.

Mandatory reporting is only required for those individuals who cannot report for themselves and for cases of suspicious deaths. However, mandatory reporters are encouraged to report abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation for any suspected case. If any individual’s death is suspected to be related to abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation, a mandated reporter must report the death as they would a suspected case of abuse.

# THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Because the Illinois Adult Protective Services Program assists victims of emotional abuse, neglect and deprivation, as well as victims of sexual abuse, physical abuse and financial exploitation, not all cases involve criminal behavior. Yet, some incidents do involve assaults, batteries, fraud, unlawful restraint and other serious crimes. Additionally, law enforcement officers may respond to reports of alleged criminal activity, law enforcement officers may occasionally be requested to accompany an Adult Protective Services caseworker to a home to investigate a case; only when the worker has a good reason to believe that a dangerous situation exists.

As with other family problems, abuse and neglect are shrouded by secrecy, and victims are often reluctant to involve the criminal justice system. However, combined law enforcement and social service responses can do a great deal to alleviate the adult’s fears and to help ensure the individual’s safety.

# INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT

There are numerous indicators of physical abuse and neglect: unusual or unexplained injuries, including fractures, burns, bruises, signs of confinement (tied to furniture, etc.); evidence of inadequate care, such as poor hygiene, sunken eyes or cheeks, or dehydration.

Client behaviors which might provide important clues of abuse include: fear, withdrawal, depression, hesitation to talk openly, contradictory statements not due to mental dysfunction, agitation and anxiety, aggression, sudden or unexplained change in appearance or behavior.

Family or caregiver behaviors include: not allowing the adult to speak for himself or herself or to see others alone; socially isolated; obvious absence of assistance; blaming, threatening or insulting the adult; history of abuse or problems with alcohol or drugs; or mental illness.

# INDICATORS OF SELF-NEGLECT

The adult may be lacking essential food, clothing, shelter and healthcare; is unable to obtain goods and services necessary to maintain physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and general safety; may compulsively hoard large quantities of items and materials that impairs their ability to care for themselves or substantially threatens their life and safety.

# INDICATORS OF FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

A caregiver or family member with access to an adult’s money appears to use the funds for personal gain rather than for the adult, resulting in many unpaid bills or overdue rent, for example.

An adult does not have adequate food, clothing or personal care items when there appears to be enough money to obtain them.

An adult is grossly overcharged for residence or services.

An adult loans large sums of money with no arrangement for repayment.

An adult reports of deception or theft of property or funds.

An adult suddenly changes will or other financial documents.

# PROGRAM PROFILE

When a report is received, a trained Adult Protective Services caseworker responds within a specified time period depending on the severity of the case: within 24 hours for life threatening situations, within 72 hours for most neglect and non-threatening physical abuse situations and up to seven days for most emotional abuse or financial exploitation reports. Depending on the adult’s resources, needs and wishes, interventions may include:

- Health care services
- Home care services
- Nutrition services
- Adult day services
- Respite care and support groups for the caregiver
- Housing assistance
- Counseling referral for the victim and/or the abuser
- Review for surrogate decision maker
- Review of placement needs
- Emergency responses for housing, food, physical and/or mental health services
- Financial or legal assistance and protections, such as representative payee, direct deposit, trusts, order of protection, civil suit and/or criminal charges.

Additional training on Adult Protective Services is available. For more information, please contact

**Aging.APS.Training@illinois.gov.**

You may also visit:

**<https://ilaging.illinois.gov/engage.html>**

to learn more about Adult Protective Services and the Illinois Department on Aging.

The Adult Protective Services Program can help only those adults at risk who are identified through a report. By making a report to Adult Protective Services you are helping Adult Protective Services assure the health, welfare and safety of adults and adults with disabilities. All calls are confidential. If you are aware of someone who may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation, call now.

**Adult Protective Services Hotline:  
1-866-800-1409, 24-hour, toll-free**

**A LAW ENFORCEMENT  
TOOLKIT IS AVAILABLE AT:**

