



Call the **Elder Abuse  
Helpline 1300 651 192**

**Elder Abuse happens.  
Know the signs, make it stop.**

[www.qld.gov.au/knowthesigns](http://www.qld.gov.au/knowthesigns)



**Queensland  
Government**

## WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act — or lack of appropriate action — occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.

Elder abuse happens and it's important to know the signs.



## THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ABUSE

### ► **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is an act that causes physical pain or injury to an older person. It can include, but is not limited to, actions such as hitting, pushing and kicking.

Inappropriate use of medical or physical restraints is also an example of physical abuse.

### ► **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse includes any sexual behaviour performed without an older person's consent. It includes sexual contact and non-contact acts of a sexual nature that cause an older person to feel uncomfortable or threatened, or cause physical hurt.

### ► **Psychological abuse**

Psychological or emotional abuse includes any act that causes emotional pain or injury to an older person. It can include, but is not limited to, insults or threats, humiliation or disrespect, and controlling behaviours such as confining or isolating the older person.

### ► **Financial abuse**

Financial abuse is the misuse or theft of an older person's money or assets. It can include, but is not limited to, using finances without permission, using an enduring power of attorney for purposes contrary to the interests of the older person, withholding care for financial gain, and selling or transferring property against the older person's wishes or without the person's knowledge.

## ► Neglect

Neglect is the failure of a carer to meet an older person's basic needs such as food or medical care. It can include, but is not limited to, providing inadequate food, drink or supervision, isolating the older person, allocating medication inappropriately and failing to meet physical needs (e.g. in relation to hygiene and skin care).

## KNOW THE SIGNS

Knowing the signs of elder abuse is a key step in prevention.

If you suspect an older person is being subjected to elder abuse, pay close attention and see if you can identify any of the behaviour changes or signs described here.



## SOME SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE

### Changes in general behaviour

- ▶ Fear of one or many persons
- ▶ Irritability or being easily upset
- ▶ Worry or anxiety for no obvious reason
- ▶ Depression, apathy or withdrawal
- ▶ Changes in sleep patterns or eating habits
- ▶ Rigid posture and avoidance of contact
- ▶ Avoidance of eye contact or continuous darting of eyes
- ▶ Contradictory statements unrelated to mental confusion
- ▶ Reluctance to talk openly

### Physical abuse

- ▶ Injuries such as skin trauma (e.g. bruising, skin tears, burns, welts, unexplained fractures and sprains)
- ▶ Signs of restraint (e.g. at the wrists or waist)
- ▶ Unexplained behaviour changes suggesting under-medication or over-medication
- ▶ Unusual patterns of injury

### Sexual abuse

- ▶ Unexplained bruising or infections
- ▶ Reports of threats or coercion of a sexual nature

## **Psychological abuse**

- ▶ Reluctance to talk
- ▶ Anxiety, nervousness, fear, apathy, resignation, withdrawal, avoidance of eye contact
- ▶ Rocking or huddling up
- ▶ Loss of interest in self or environment
- ▶ Insomnia or sleep deprivation

## **Financial abuse**

- ▶ Lack of money to purchase medication, food or personal items
- ▶ Defaulting on payment of rent
- ▶ Removal of assets from the family home or unauthorised use of assets

## **Neglect**

- ▶ Decline in hygiene (e.g. bad odour, urine rash)
- ▶ Malnourishment, weight loss, dehydration (dark urine, dry tongue, lax skin)
- ▶ Bed sores (sacrum, hips, heels, elbows)
- ▶ Being over-sedated or under-sedated
- ▶ Broken or missing aids such as spectacles, dentures, hearing aid or walking frame

Source: The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners 2014, *Abuse and violence: working with our patients in general practice* (4th edition), Melbourne.

## HELP AVAILABLE

If you think someone you know is being subjected to elder abuse, call the **Elder Abuse Helpline 1300 651 192** for free, confidential advice (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm).

### Do I need proof?

You don't need to have proof to seek help. Helpline staff will help determine whether the behaviour you're concerned about is elder abuse when you call.

### Emergency and support services

If an older person is in clear and present danger of harm, call triple zero (000).

### Legal and social support services

Services are available across Queensland to provide social support and legal advice to people who have experienced elder abuse.

- ▶ Brisbane: (07) 3214 6333
- ▶ Cairns: 1800 062 608 or (07) 4031 7688
- ▶ Hervey Bay: (07) 4124 6863
- ▶ Toowoomba: (07) 4616 9700
- ▶ Townsville: (07) 4721 5511

Call 1300 063 232 to access support and advice services located in:

- ▶ Gladstone
- ▶ Gold Coast
- ▶ Mackay
- ▶ Rockhampton
- ▶ Sunshine Coast.

## **Office of the Public Guardian**

1300 653 187 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm).

## **Public Trustee**

The Public Trustee provides a range of services to Queenslanders, including will making, enduring powers of attorney, executor and financial administration services at 15 offices across the state. To make an appointment, visit the Public Trustee website or call 1300 360 044.

Other confidential advice and support services:

- ▶ Lifeline: 13 11 14  
(24-hour crisis support line)
- ▶ Legal Aid Queensland: 1300 651 188  
(8.30 am to 5 pm)
- ▶ DVConnect Womensline: 1800 811 811  
(24 hours, 7 days a week)
- ▶ DVConnect Mensline: 1800 600 636  
(9 am to midnight, 7 days a week)