Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Recognizing these warning signs of elder abuse can be a very effective tool in early intervention and prevention of further abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE	• Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on two sides of the body • Broken bones, sprains, or dislocations • Report of drug overdose or apparent failure to take medication regularly (a prescription has more remaining than it should) • Broken eyeglasses or frames • Signs of being restrained, such as rope marks on wrists • Caregiver's refusal to allow the elder to be seen alone
EMOTIONAL ABUSE	**In addition to the general signs above, indications of emotional elder abuse include** • Threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver behavior that is witnessed • Behavior from the elder that mimics dementia, such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling to oneself
SEXUAL ABUSE	• Bruises around breasts or genitals • Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections • Unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding • Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing

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NEGLECT BY CAREGIVERS OR SELF-NEGLECT	• Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration • Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores • Unsanitary living conditions: dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes • Being left dirty or unbathed • Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather • Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, other fire hazards) • Desertion of the elder at a public place
FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION	• Significant withdrawals from the elder's accounts • Sudden changes in the elder's financial condition • Items or cash missing from the senior's household • Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, titles, and policies • Addition of names to the senior's signature card • Unpaid bills or lack of medical care, although the elder has enough money to pay for them • Financial activity the senior couldn't have done, such as an ATM withdrawal when the account holder is bedridden • Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions
HEALTHCARE FRAUD AND ABUSE	• Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device • Evidence of overmedication or under-medication • Evidence of inadequate care when bills are paid in full • Problems with the care facility: - Poorly trained, poorly paid, or insufficient staff - Crowding - Inadequate responses to questions about care