

# KEEP IT SAFE: Elder Abuse Prevention

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## What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is any form of mistreatment that results in harm or loss to an older person. It is generally divided into the following categories:

- **Physical abuse** is physical force that results in bodily injury, pain, or impairment. It includes assault, battery, and inappropriate restraint.
- **Sexual abuse** is non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an older person.
- **Domestic violence** is an escalating pattern of violence by an intimate partner where the violence is used to exercise power and control.
- **Psychological abuse** is the willful infliction of mental or emotional anguish by threat, humiliation, or other verbal or nonverbal conduct.
- **Financial abuse** is the illegal or improper use of an older person's funds, property, or resources.
- **Neglect** is the failure of a caregiver to fulfill his or her care giving responsibilities. **Self-neglect** is failure to provide for one's own essential needs.

## Signs of Possible Abuse

If you suspect elder abuse, but aren't sure, look for clusters of the following physical and behavioral signs.

### General signs of abuse

The following are warning signs of some kind of elder abuse:

- Frequent arguments or tension between the caregiver and the elderly person
- Changes in personality or behavior in the elder

### Physical abuse

- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, welts, or scars, especially if they appear symmetrically on two side 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 you to see the elder alone

### Emotional abuse

In addition to the general signs above, indications of emotional elder abuse include:

- Threatening, belittling, or controlling caregiver behavior that you witness
- 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

### 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

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## Healthcare fraud and abuse

- Duplicate billings for the same medical service or device
- Evidence of overmedication or undermedication
- Evidence of inadequate care when bills are paid in full

## Report Abuse

Each state designates a lead agency or agencies to assume responsibility for investigating abuse reports. Typically one of the following agencies will investigate:

- Adult protective services (APS) is the primary agency to accept reports in most states. In Texas, it is listed under the Department of Family & Protective Services.
- Law enforcement is responsible for investigating abuse when it is criminal.
- Long-term care ombudsman programs are federally funded programs that investigate reports of abuse in nursing homes and residential care facilities.
- Medicaid fraud and control units: Under federal law, state Attorneys General are required to investigate and prosecute fraud and patient abuse or neglect in health care facilities that participate in Medicaid.

If you suspect that an elder has been the victim of abuse, please contact one of the following agencies:

### 1. If the victim is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1

### 2. Your local law enforcement agency

Listed are local agencies within the 79<sup>th</sup> JD

Brooks Co. SO	(361)325-3696
Jim Wells Co. SO	(361)668-0341
Alice PD	(361)664-0186
Falfurrias PD	(361)325-5041
Premont PD	(361)348-3231
Orange Grove PD	(361)384-2844
San Diego PD	(361)279-2924

### 3. Department of Family & Protective Services

(800) 252-5400- Abuse Hotline  
(800)647-7418- APS Facility Investigations

### 4. Department of Aging

(800)458-9858- Nursing Home Abuse

### 4. Texas Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Unit

(800)252-8011- Medicaid Related Abuse

### 5. Texas Department of State Health Services

(888)973-0022- Medical/Psychiatric Facility related abuse

The personal losses associated with elder abuse can be devastating and include the loss of independence, homes, life savings, health, dignity, and security.

You can make a difference.

**Learn the Truth** about elder abuse.

**Know the Signs** of elder abuse.

**Report the Abuse** when suspected.

## ABOUT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**Carlos Omar Garcia**, 79<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney.

Carlos was born and raised in Alice with extended family ties in Jim Wells, Brooks, and Duval Counties. Carlos began his distinguished prosecutorial career in 1997. Before being elected as District Attorney, Carlos worked an Assistant District Attorney for Kleberg and Kenedy Counties (2008-2012) and the 79<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office for Brooks & Jim Wells Counties (1997-2008). In addition to his service as a felony prosecutor, Carlos has also served as an Assistant County Attorney for Brooks, Jim Wells, and Kleberg Counties.

In addition to his background as a prosecutor, Carlos is a certified martial arts/self defense instructor, certified NRA *Refuse to Be a Victim* instructor, and NRA Pistol Instructor.

## COMPLIMENTS OF



## CARLOS OMAR GARCIA 79<sup>th</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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