

Elder Abuse and Neglect

Advisory Council on Aging and
Disability Services

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- **Page Ulrey**
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- **Domestic Violence Unit**
- **Seattle Police Department**

What is elder abuse?

- **Physical/Emotional Abuse**
- **Sexual Abuse**
- **Neglect/Abandonment**
- **Financial Exploitation of a Dependent Person**

Who are the victims?

- Those who are:
 - Elderly
 - Physically disabled
 - Developmentally disabled

Elder abuse is exploding

- Fastest growing age group
- No known cure for dementia etc.
- Victims often do not report
- Third fastest growth job is home care
- Minimal background checks
- High temptation, low risk factors

As few as one in fourteen cases of elder abuse is actually reported.

-Illinois Department on Aging

**From 1 to 2 million
Americans aged 65 or over
have been harmed by a
caretaker in a domestic or
institutional setting.**

--National Research Council

**Of the 9 million
Americans over age 65
who live alone, 2 million
say they have no one to
turn to if they need help.**

--U.S. Administration on Aging

Things are not going to improve...

- People 85 and over are fastest growing age group in U.S.
- This population will increase 401% from 1995 to 2050
- From 2010 to 2030, population 65 to 84 will grow by 80%

**Elder abuse is often
domestic violence.**

84% of elder abuse is committed by the elderly victim's relative, most often the victim's adult child.

-U.S. Administration on Aging

Understanding the Dynamics

- Seniors' reluctance to cooperate due to:
 - shame
 - learned helplessness
 - belief that abuser will change
 - love for abuser
 - threats by abuser
 - fear of loss of home and independence
 - alienation from the system

Common Crimes Against the Elderly and Disabled

- Sexual Abuse
- Physical/Emotional Abuse
- Neglect/Abandonment
- Financial Abuse

Some Myths About Sexual Assault of the Elderly

- **Sexual assault is motivated by arousal and desire**
- **The elderly are not sexually desirable, therefore are not likely rape victims**

The Reality

- 18% of rape victims are 60 or over
- Elderly victims are more likely to be injured during a sexual assault
- 1 in 7 sexual assault murder victims is 60 or over

Sexual Assault of People with Developmental Disabilities

- **Women with DD are 4-11 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than women without DD**
- **80-90% of women and 54% of men with DD will experience a sexual assault at some time in their lives**

Sobsey, 2000; Stromsness, 1993

People with Disabilities Are More Likely To:

- Experience more severe abuse
- Experience abuse for longer duration
- Be victims of multiple episodes
- Be victims of a larger number of perpetrators

Schaller & Fieberg, 1998; Sobsey & Doe, 1991; Young et al., 1997

Case Example

- **Victim 35 years old, developmental age of a 9-month old**
- **Defendant working at facility past 9 years**
- **Worked alone, had complete access to residents**
- **Prosecution based on DNA alone**

Physical/Emotional Abuse

- Typical perpetrator is adult son/daughter who is unemployed, drug/alcohol addicted, living with elderly parent
- 13.4% of substantiated elder abuse is perpetrated by spouses (NCEA, 1994).

A Typical Case

Victim

- 79 years old
- Suffers from mild dementia, diabetes, and some mobility issues
- Lives in own home with son
- Home is in disrepair
 - Violations in past for excessive garbage on property
- Has pets
- Wants to remain in home

Perpetrator

- 58 years old
- Moved back in with mom after father died (over 10 years ago)
- Has substance abuse issues and possible mental health issues
- Does not work
- Receives SSI funds, but relies on mother for shelter, food, spending money, etc.
- Controlling and verbally abusive towards mom
- Does not assist mother in home

Agencies Involved

- **Seattle Police Department**
 - 14 police reports generated since 2004
- **SFD**
- **Adult Protective Services**
- **Geriatric Regional Assessment Team**
- **Home and Community Services (DSHS)**
- **Attorney General's Office**
- **City Attorney's Office**
- **City Probation Department**
- **Private guardianship company**

The Abuse

- 1996: harassment begins
- 2004: mom becomes ill and bedridden. Lies in bed in her own feces for several days. Son refuses to help. Mom is hospitalized, but later returns home. No charges filed. APS becomes involved.

The Abuse, cont'd.:

- **2005-2007: mom reports multiple thefts by son. Mom typically cooperates at time of report, but then refuses to assist with prosecution.**
- **Early 2007: mom reports that son assaulted her and then stole from her. Son is arrested, but mom again declines to cooperate with prosecution.**

The Abuse, cont'd.:

- **Spring, 2007: mom becomes ill and lies on the floor for several days. Son is charged with Criminal Mistreatment. A No Contact Order is issued.**
- **Summer, 2007: Son is convicted. After release from jail, is arrested again for violating NCO by moving back into mother's residence.**

The Abuse, cont'd.:

- **APS and AG's office obtain guardianship for mom. When son is released from jail he interferes with guardian and denies guardian access to house.**
- **No Contact Order is reinstated, and son is arrested twice more for Violation of Court Order**

Challenges/Common Issues

- Mom reports abuse, but then misses son and wants him back home.
- Mom never supports No Contact Order.
- Mom refuses help when outside agencies attempt to connect her with services.
- Mom never gives up hope that son will "get better."

Types of Financial Abuse

- Theft
- Credit card fraud
- Real property transfers
- Home improvement scams/burglaries

Types of Financial Abuse

- Work by unlicensed contractors/overcharging
- Telemarketing & sweepstakes scams
- Investment fraud
- Embezzlement by power of attorney, guardian
- Undue influence

Neglect

- Occurs in nursing homes, adult family homes, boarding homes
- Occurs in the home
 - Perpetrated by:
 - family members, friends
 - paid caregivers
 - elderly person him/herself

**“... [A]bout 70% to 80%
of elder mistreatment is
neglect.”**

**-Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, Division of
Nursing, NYU**

LaShawn R.

- 32 years old
- Cerebral Palsy, Parkinson's Disease
- Lived with two uncles
 - state-paid caregivers
- Increasing care needs

LaShawn R.

- Prior to admission, visited by nurse for state agency
- 1/4/02 admitted to local hospital with 11 pressure ulcers
- malnutrition
- contractures

LaShawn R.

- Local E.R. never reported incident
- First reported by nursing home several weeks later
- Some evidence gone
- Witnesses reluctant to cooperate

Some Signs of Hope...

- **Increasing legislative interest**
 - Washington State
 - U.S.
- **Multiple Detectives in SPD**
- **Improved Systems Coordination**
- **MDTs in King County**

Feel Free to Contact Us. . .

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