

This month's topic is a particularly difficult one—Sexual Abuse.

This issue explores some of the signs of sexual abuse, who is most vulnerable, and ways to protect residents. Read on to learn more...



Definition of Sexual Abuse

“Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind [or] coercing an elder to witness sexual behaviors” (definition provided by the National Center on Law and Elder Rights)

Signs of Sexual Abuse

The following signs may be “red flags” that a resident has been sexually abused:

- ◆ Pain, bruising, and/or bleeding of the thighs, genitals, or anal area
- ◆ Newly developed depression or anxiety
- ◆ Withdrawal
- ◆ Engaging in unusual, inappropriate, or aggressive sexual activities
- ◆ Unexplained sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- ◆ Difficulty walking or sitting

Verbal expressions may include:

- ◆ “Leave me alone!”
- ◆ “I’m afraid”
- ◆ “Get out!”
- ◆ “I just want to die”
- ◆ “I don’t want to talk about it”



Did you Know?

- ⇒ Although sexual abuse is the least common type of abuse, it is extremely damaging, both physically and mentally.
- ⇒ As with other types of abuse, sexual abuse is *highly underreported*. Reasons include:
 - shame
 - fear of retaliation from the abuser
 - residents with mental or physical disabilities may be unable to recount their experience or tell law enforcement
- ⇒ Those at a higher risk of sexual abuse include residents who:
 - are female
 - are living with dementia or other disabilities that could prevent them from consenting to sexual contact or experiences
 - are unable to protect or defend themselves
- ⇒ Sometimes when sexual abuse is reported by an older adult, it is not taken seriously because of the person’s age or mental capacity. However,
- ⇒ **As Mandatory Reporters, ALL disclosures and/or suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation must be reported.**

Who Commits Sexual Abuse?

- ◆ Family and others who gain access to vulnerable people
- ◆ Staff in long-term care settings
- ◆ Other residents

Protecting Your Residents

Use person-centered care to keep residents safe from sexual predators:

- Get to know your residents so you can recognize unusual behaviors or moods.
- Know and understand the signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Be especially aware of your residents who may be most vulnerable.
- If you notice any possible signs or suspect that a resident has been sexually abused, report your suspicions, immediately!
- Don't be afraid to ask for help when you feel overwhelmed—providing self-care and managing your stress benefits everyone!

**Elder Abuse helpline/hotline:
(800) 677-1116**

**WORKING
TO PROTECT
OUR
RESIDENTS**



It's up to all of us to help protect our vulnerable older adults!

(Some of the information in this issue was obtained from <https://www.nursinghomeabuse.org/articles/4-nursing-home-sexual-abuse-statistics/>)

To Report Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation

Of a nursing home resident by a staff member:
Call State of Michigan LARA: **(800) 882-6006**

Of an adult living anywhere in the community or an adult in a nursing home, if the abuse is by anyone who is *not* a staff member:

**Adult Protective Services (APS) Centralized Intake:
(855) 444-3911**

If you think a crime has occurred: Call your local police/sheriff department (and LARA)

A BIG
*thank
you*
♥

**It takes courage
to stand up for
vulnerable adults
and your efforts
are appreciated!**

For More Information

Long Term Care Ombudsman: (517) 394-3027
Tri-County Office on Aging: (800) 405-9141

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