



What are the types of elder abuse?

Elder abuse may be criminal or civil under California law

Criminal abuse occurs in instances where a person who knows that a person is elderly (65 years and older) and willfully causes or allows the elderly person to suffer, or who inflicts unjustifiable physical pain or suffering onto the elderly person. Also, if a person allows or causes an elderly person to be placed in a situation where the elderly person's health is endangered, this, too, is elder abuse (See California Penal Code Section 368).

Civil abuse is defined as physical abuse, neglect, financial abuse, abandonment, isolation, abduction or any other treatment that results in physical harm or mental suffering. The deprivation of goods or services needed by an elderly person to avoid physical harm or mental suffering is also civil abuse (See Welfare & Institutions Code Section 15610.07).

Types of abuse:

1. **Physical abuse:** To inflict physical pain or injury, including sexual assault or molestation, or use of restraints, either physical, chemical or both, for punishment without (or beyond the scope of) a physician's order;
2. **Neglect:** Failure to live up to a caretaking obligation. Examples: failure to provide assistance with personal hygiene, failure to provide food, clothing, shelter and basic necessities, failure to protect a person from health and safety hazards.
3. **Financial abuse:** Illegal or unethical exploitation or use of an elderly person's assets, funds or other property.
4. **Abandonment:** Desertion of an elderly person by someone who has assumed responsibility for providing care.
5. **Isolation:** Preventing an elderly person from his or her mail, telephone calls or visitors.
6. **Abduction:** Removing an elderly person without consent and taking him or her to another state.
7. **Self-neglect:** The inability, due to physical or mental impairment or diminished capacity, to obtain essential food, clothing, shelter, medical care; or obtain goods and services necessary to maintain physical health, mental health or safety, and/or managing one's financial affairs.

Note: Self-neglect is not recognized in every state as a form of abuse, though it is in California.

What are the symptoms of abuse?

Physical Abuse and Neglect Symptoms:

- Bruises, skin abrasions, broken bones
- Reaction of pain when touched, even if an injury is not visible
- Weight loss, dehydration, malnutrition
- Bed sores
- Poor hygiene

Behavioral Symptoms:

- Depression
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Withdrawn
- Changes in personality
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Agitation
- Not responsive to questions
- Reluctance to speak openly

Financial Abuse Indicators:

- Missing belongings
- Unpaid bills
- Unexplained and/or large withdrawals from the elderly person's account
- Unexplained purchases
- Newly opened accounts without authorization

Caregiver Abuse Indicators:

- Attitude of indifference toward the elderly person
- Failure to render assistance
- Anger toward the elderly person
- Isolation of the elderly person
- Restriction of the elderly person's activities
- Caregiver substance abuse
- Caregiver not allowing the elderly person to speak for him- or herself

Self-Neglect Indicators:

- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Excessive dirt or odor
- Unclean or unsafe living conditions
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing
- Exposure to elements
- Unexpected or unexplained deterioration in health
- Refusal to take medication
- Drug misuse or overuse