

Elder Abuse Web Site Offers Resources and Contacts

By Littman Krooks LLP | 05/07/07

As our population ages, abuse of the elderly is becoming a growing problem. Elder abuse can take many forms: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial or material exploitation, abandonment, or neglect.

If you suspect elder abuse, an outstanding resource for professionals and public alike is [the National Center on Elder Abuse \(NCEA\)](#) Web site. Among other things, the site offers a state-by-state listing of 24-hour toll-free numbers for reporting abuse, as well as information on elder abuse laws and an elder abuse listserv for professionals. The following is adapted from the NCEA site.

More than two-thirds of elder abuse perpetrators are family members of the victims, typically serving in a caregiving role and typically adult children. Caring for frail older people is a very difficult and stressful task. This is particularly true when older people are mentally or physically impaired, when the caregiver is ill-prepared for the task, or when the needed resources are lacking. Under these circumstances, the increased stress and frustration of a caregiver may lead to abuse or willful neglect. Researchers have found that abuse tends to occur when the stress level of the caregiver is heightened as a result of a worsening of the elder's impairment.

Adult children who abuse their parents frequently suffer from such problems as mental and emotional disorders, alcoholism, drug addiction, and financial difficulty. Because of these problems, these adult children are often dependent on the elders for their support. Abuse in these cases may be an inappropriate response by the children to the sense of their own inadequacies.

Most physical, sexual, and financial/material abuses are considered crimes in all states. In addition, certain emotional abuse and neglect cases are subject to criminal prosecution. In many states, crimes against persons older than 65 are special crimes carrying enhanced penalties.

When domestic elder abuse occurs, it can be addressed, provided it comes to the attention of authorities. In most jurisdictions, either Adult Protective Services (typically located within the human service agency), the Area Agency on Aging, or the county Department of Social Services is the agency that receives and investigate allegations of elder abuse and neglect. If the investigators find abuse or neglect, they make arrangements for services to help protect the victim.

Visit the NCEA Web site at: <http://www.elderabusecenter.org/>