



PO 225.5: Responsibility to Report Suspected Elder Abuse and Neglect

PR 225.5.

The Elder Abuse and Neglect Act requires a GA Unit employee to report suspected abuse of a person age 60 or older:

- with whom they have contact in a working capacity **and**
- who, because of dysfunction, is unable to report for themselves.

Dysfunction is any physical or mental condition which renders an older person unable to seek help for themselves. Such conditions might include dementia, paralysis, speech disorders, being confined to bed, or unable to reach or use a telephone.

a. Elder Abuse Defined

Elder abuse refers to the mistreatment of a person 60 years of age or older who lives in the community. Abuse is committed by another person on the elder and is one of the following types:

- Abuse - physical, sexual, or emotional mistreatment and/or willful confinement.
- Neglect - the failure of a caregiver to provide the older person with the necessities of life, including but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.
- Financial exploitation - the misuse or withholding of the older person's resources by another to the disadvantage of the older person and/or the profit of another.

b. Reporting Elder Abuse

Report suspected elder abuse within 24 hours to the Department on Aging's (DoA's) Elder Abuse and Neglect Program. Call one of the following numbers:

- the DoA Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday); or
- the DoA After-Hours Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-800-279-0400 (5:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday; and all weekend and holiday hours); or
- the designated Elder Abuse Provider Agency in the client's area (see [WAG 25-05-03](#)).

When making a report, provide the following information:

- the alleged victim's name, address, telephone number, sex, age, and general condition;
- the alleged abuser's name, sex, age, relationship to victim, and condition;
- the circumstances which lead you to believe the older person is being abused, neglected, or financially exploited;
- whether the alleged victim is in immediate danger; the best time to contact the person; if they know of the report; and if there is any danger to the worker going out;
- whether you believe the client could make a report themselves;
- your name, telephone number, and profession;
- the names of others with information about the situation;
- if you are willing to be contacted; and
- any other relevant information.

Even if you do not have all of the above information, make the call and report as much information as possible. DoA will accept an anonymous report.

c. DoA Investigation

When a report is made, an elder abuse caseworker, trained by DoA, responds within a specified timeframe and conducts an assessment. If abuse is substantiated, a plan is developed to reduce or eliminate the abuse. All reports and records are strictly confidential. A competent older person may decline an investigation and services.

d. Protection for Persons Reporting Elder Abuse

The Elder Abuse and Neglect Act provides protection to a person who reports abuse. Anyone who makes an elder abuse report in good faith is exempt from civil and criminal liability, as well as professional disciplinary action. By law, the name of the person who reported the abuse may be released only with their written consent or by the order of a court.

e. Reporting Elder Abuse - Long Term Care

Elder abuse reported to DoA applies to older persons who live in the community. To report the suspected abuse or neglect of long term care residents, call the Department of Public Health (DPH) Long Term Care/Nursing Home Hotline at 1-800-252-4343. The hotline operates 24 hours a day.