

ELDER ABUSE

BY: TANIA MANGUAL-MONZÓN, BSHE, MS

The older adult is the person of 60 years or older. Elder abuse refers to conduct characterized by the undue or negligent treatment of a person by another person, causing harm or exposing them to risk of harm to their health, welfare or property. In Puerto Rico most of the cases reported have to do with negligence and financial abuse, according to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Know the most common signs of abuse:

- Negligence: Poor personal care, malnutrition, chronic physical or mental health problems, dehydration and pressure ulcers.
- Financial abuse: Transfer of goods or property of the elderly person on behalf of the caregiver; Forcing people to sign papers that the older adult cannot identify or know their purpose; the situation of life does not keep proportion with material goods, among others.
- Own negligence: Lack of health services, housing infested with insects, rats and / or other animals, changes in intellectual function, not attending medical appointments, not taking medication or eating food for no reason, among others.
- Psychological abuse: Passivity, shame, anxiety, depression, helplessness, thoughts of suicide, confusion, disorientation, among others.
- Physical abuse: Cuts, bruises, burns, punctures and strangulation marks; as well as repeated blows or injuries without explanation and frequent falls.
- Sexual abuse: Genital trauma, sexually transmitted disease and lacerations.

Elder abuse affects all socioeconomic groups, races and religions. It happens anywhere; either a home, a health facility or an establishment for the care of older adults. If you know someone who is going through a life-threatening situation or is in immediate danger, call 911. **"The abuse is not ignored. Indifference is abuse."**

In case of emergency please call:

Family Department Abuse Line: **1-800-981-8333**

Family Department Social Emergencies program: **787-749-1333**

Matters of the old age: **1-877-725-4300 | (787) 721-4560 | (787) 721-6121**