

Senior Safety, and Elderly Abuse

Crime Prevention For Senior Citizens

One of the best ways to take an active part in crime prevention is to become more alert and aware of what's going on around you.

Each person should adopt a more observant and active attitude on a daily basis. As a result, you become more aware of strange cars, persons or circumstances which might be dangerous and require calling the police.

Don't Be A Victim Of Fraud

If someone offers a deal that sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Yet every day people get taken in by different schemes.

Con artists defraud and cheat unsuspecting citizens out of several billion dollars each year. The swindler's prime target is the senior citizen. Swindlers see the elderly as easy marks for many reasons. Many senior citizens live on social security and pensions supplemented by savings. They may be looking for ways to increase their incomes through investments, home business opportunities or retirement properties.

Most con artists promise "incredible bargains" or "quick money." Unfortunately, senior citizens are just as vulnerable as everybody else when it comes to get-rich-quick schemes.

Swindlers are usually well-dressed, talkative and intelligent. After all, they are trying to win your confidence.

Con Artist Schemes

Con artist schemes come in a variety of situations. Just to name a few, BEWARE OF:

The Phony Bank Examiner Scheme- a telephone caller will identify himself as a bank examiner who is trying to weed out a disloyal employee by getting you to withdraw money from your bank account and turn it over to them.

Pigeon Drop- the swindler will claim to have found a large sum of money with you being the witness to the findings. A second person will come into the scene and help to convince you to put up good faith money, switch the real money with phony money and leave you holding the bag.

Buying at the Door Schemes- someone might come to your door and offer to sell home insulation, energy saving devices or burglar bars. BEWARE! Do not purchase or sign any contracts without first having it examined by someone you know and trust. Also check with the Better Business Bureau to see if this company is legitimate. Remember, anything that sounds too good to be true might be just that. So talk to your bank officer before withdrawing a large sum of money from your bank account to make a purchase or close a deal. Remember, most criminals look for the easiest way to get something of value.

Purse Snatch

"Purse snatching" is a common crime, but not widely publicized. Any woman is a target for this offense, even though elderly women seem to be more vulnerable.

Eight percent of reported purse snatchings that occur in Texas are elderly women 65 years and older.

You can minimize your chances of becoming a victim of purse snatching by following these simple rules:

Do not carry a shoulder bag over your shoulder. This makes it easier for a suspect to grab the bag, knock you down and cause bodily injury.

Carry a small clutch-type handbag underneath your arm. This will prevent bodily injury from occurring in the event of a purse snatch.

Do not carry large sums of money, valuable jewelry or all of your credit cards in your purse.

Carry only what you plan to use for the day. This includes one check instead of the whole checkbook or one credit card.

Do not walk with your purse dangling from your person.

Do not leave your purse in shopping carts or on counters.

The most frequent areas for purse snatching are bus stops, grocery stores, and shopping center parking lots.

The harder you make it, the less likely you are to become a victim of a crime.

You Are Not Alone: An Elder Abuse Information and Resource Guide

Although elder abuse has occurred for centuries, it wasn't until the late 1970's – early 1980's that elder abuse victims received national attention. In 1981 the Select Committee on Aging held hearings in which victimized elders gave firsthand testimony of their experiences. The report concluded that elder abuse is a full scale national problem, and exists with a frequency few dare to imagine. It is estimated that 1.5 to 1.84 million Americans are victims of elder abuse annually. To address this issue the Clifton Police Department offers training on elder abuse, community education programs, and works closely with Adult Protective Services and the Office of the Attorney General on elder abuse investigations.

Elder Abuse is Rarely Reported

One of the obstacles in determining an accurate number of elder abuse victims is the fact that elder abuse is rarely reported. Estimates show that only 1 in 14 incidents of elder abuse are reported to authorities. The reasons why this abuse is rarely reported include:

Fear

- Fear of retaliation by the abuser
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of being institutionalized, or separated from family and familiar things
- Fear of the criminal justice system
- Fear of loneliness

Protect the Abuser

- **Adult children are often the abusers, and because of the guilt and shame in being abused by one's own children, the abuse is not reported.**

Social Isolation

- **An isolated older victim may not know how or where to seek help. Elders often live alone, or with family members and don't interact with others in the community.**

Self-Blame/Denial

- **Many victims do not seek help because they either blame themselves for the abuse, or they tolerate and accept the abuse.**

Inability to Report

- **Mental impairments: dementia, or Alzheimer's disease, cause memory loss, and in the later stages of these illnesses people lose the ability to communicate effectively.**
- **Physical impairments: strokes can affect the ability to communicate and report abuse, and because of other physical impairments, victims cannot get to the phone or leave the home to get help.**

Types of Elder Abuse & the Warning Signs

- **Physical Abuse:** the infliction of physical pain or injury, and/or use of physical restraints that result in physical pain or impairment

Warning signs: bruises, welts, lacerations, fractures, burns, hair missing from being pulled, abrasions from physical confinement, over- or under- medicated, unexpected deterioration of health; victim is agitated or fearful, caregiver refuses to let elder have visitors.

- **Sexual Abuse:** non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person

Warning signs: unexplained genital infections or sexually transmitted diseases, torn or bloody underclothes, difficulty walking or sitting; victim is withdrawn, fears touching, shameful, anxious.

- **Psychological/Emotional Abuse:** infliction of mental pain, anguish or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts

Warning signs : fearful, eating disorders, self-medication with alcohol or prescription medications, depression, agitation, withdrawn, anger, low self-esteem.

- **Financial Abuse/Exploitation**: illegal or improper use of funds, property, or assets.

Warning signs : unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills, unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts, disparity between assets and living conditions, unusual interest by family member in an elder's assets, changes in the elder's will/other documents, improper use of guardianship, conservatorship, or power of attorney.

- **Neglect**: failure or refusal to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elderly person

Warning signs : bed sores, dehydration, malnutrition, poor hygiene, unsanitary/unsafe living conditions, improper use of medication; victim appears detached, unresponsive, helpless.

*A warning sign of every type of abuse is
when
the elder reports being abused.*

Characteristics of Victims

- Majority are 75+ years of age
- Two-thirds are female
- Have one or more physical or mental impairments
- Often widowed or divorced and socially isolated
- Usually live with the abuser

Characteristics of Abusers

- 90% of abusers are known to the victim
- More than two-thirds are relatives of the victim
- May be socially isolated, possibly substance abusers/with poor employment records
- May be forced to provide care, and are unprepared for the responsibility and related stress
- May be financially or emotionally dependent on the elder

How Can You Help?

Study the warning signs of the types of abuse, and share this information with friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Report suspected abuse to the Clifton Police Department, or call local Adult Protective Services.