

June Newsletter

Vulnerable Elders in the Covid-19 Era

Special Dates

- **June 2 -**
3:30pm—Zoom
Volunteer mtg.
- **June 15 - World**
Elder Abuse
Awareness Day

It is common knowledge that our elder population is more susceptible to the harmful health effects of Covid-19, but we may not think about how the circumstances surrounding this pandemic have made our seniors more vulnerable to elder abuse as well. As we approach World Elder Abuse Awareness Day - June 15 - let's take a look at how this outbreak may increase elder abuse, and find out how to protect our older friends and loved ones.

The CDC defines elder abuse as an intentional act or failure to act by a caregiver or other trusted person that creates a risk of harm to an older, (60+), adult. The forms that this abuse may take include physical or sexual abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, or emotional abuse. Elder abuse may occur in the senior's home, family member's home, or residential care facilities; perpetrators may include family members, residential facility staff, in-home caregivers, or strangers.

We know that social isolation is one of the major risk factors for elder abuse during "normal" times, so during this time of social distancing, that risk has increased significantly. Loneliness and fear generated by this pandemic not only create negative health effects, but may increase an individual's anxiety and depressive symptoms. The growing dependency on others for daily living activities also increases a senior's vulnerability to abuse. Some seniors might turn to the internet in order to connect with others, leaving them open to an increasing number of financial and medical scams.

Add all of these factors into a situation where senior centers are closed, church gatherings are not happening, residential care facilities are closed for visitation, and even large family functions are on hold, and the risk of abuse can skyrocket. In addition, the fear of contracting Covid-19 may keep an older person from trying to access services or help. With fewer opportunities to connect with trusted friends and loved ones, seniors have more limited ways to get help if they are in an abusive situation.

So how can we prevent a surge in elder abuse during this difficult time?

Central to stemming elder abuse is good communication with the senior. Although more difficult during this pandemic, it is important to check in frequently with them, whether through phone, text, email, video chat, or an in-person porch visit. Make sure that the person has your contact info readily available and can access it as easily as possible.

Knowing where to find resources for help is important, too. The website www.ncea.acl.gov is an excellent place to find resources, common scenarios, red flags of abuse, and much more. Shenandoah Co. DSS has Adult Protective Services staff that is available to provide information and to report suspected elder abuse. You can reach them at 540-459-6226.

As we all learn how to deal with Covid-19, let's not forget about some of the most vulnerable folks in our community.

Current Needs

- **Disinfectant**
wipes
- **Dish sponges**
- **Laundry**
detergent
- **Napkins**
- **Clorox bleach**
- **All purpose**
liquid cleaner

Survivor Story

Several Senior Survivors

This month we are featuring several different members of our elder population in order to focus on the various types of abuse that seniors might experience. These stories have all been collected by the US Department of Justice and reflect the experiences of seniors across our country.

- **Psychological Abuse** - Jane was worried about her friend, Harry, age 87 because he had not been to mass in weeks. He usually was a faithful church member, so she decided to stop by his house. She was shocked at his appearance; he had lost weight and was obviously distraught. He spoke in a hushed voice and told Jane that ever since his daughter had moved in with him she would not let him attend church or other events, and was controlling his finances as well. Before they could continue, Jane heard his daughter yelling at him, so he shut the door quickly. Jane ended up making a report to Adult Protective Services at her local Department of Social Services.
- **Physical Abuse** - Monica, a 79 year old with ALS, was living in a long term care facility since her family was unable to take care of her. Her family became concerned when they saw bruising on her arms and back, but Monica was unable to speak and could not tell them how she got the bruising. The family made inquiries with staff at the facility, but did not receive satisfactory answers. In addition, they noticed that Monica became upset when a particular aide bathed her. The family called local law enforcement with suspicions that the aide was physically abusing Monica.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Eduardo is an 80 year old man who had had a stroke; his family hired an in-home caregiver to assist with his daily needs. One day while his daughter stopped in to see him, she helped him get dressed. He winced as she was helping him, and she noticed that his genital area was red and irritated. When questioned, Eduardo began to cry and mumbled that the caregiver had hurt him there. The daughter made a report to APS, who in turn reported to law enforcement. She also made a complaint with the agency who employed the caregiver, and ended services.
- **Financial Exploitation** - Naira, 71, is single, disabled, and retired. After receiving what she thought was an email from her bank, requesting verification of her account numbers, she provided those numbers. She later responded to an email that she thought was from a government agency investigating Medicare fraud; Naira gave her Medicare number so that they could make sure there was no fraud on her account. It was only when the bank manager called to confirm that she wanted to close her accounts that she realized that all of her savings were gone. When she told the manager about the two emails, he contacted the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare, the FBI, and Adult Protective Services.
- **Neglect** - Tamara, 76, lived with her son and daughter-in-law; she had difficulty getting around, so was mostly confined to her second floor bedroom. Her son and his wife traveled frequently for work, and sometimes neglected to give her adequate food and water; they did not help her with her personal hygiene or clean her room regularly. After becoming weak, dizzy and disoriented, her daughter took her to the hospital where they discovered that she was dehydrated, and unclean. Although Tamara told the staff that she was well cared for, they made a report of suspected neglect to Adult Protective Services.

As we can see, elder abuse can take many different forms, and the perpetrators vary widely. Response is here to provide resources and services, and to help make appropriate referrals in order to protect this vulnerable segment of our community.

Around the Shelter

Covid-19 Info

In an effort to keep our staff and clients safe from the coronavirus, we have been posting various infographics around the building.

This one teaches residents the signs of Covid-19, prevention measures, as well as a daily update of local cases.



While we wish we could say that these are temporary posters, the reality is that none of us know how long we might be living with social distancing, wearing masks, frequent hand washing, and other precautionary measures. Our goal is provide a safe environment, while still providing all of the services that our clients need.

Here is one providing the ins and outs of proper mask-wearing.



April Recap

As you know, most of our April activities for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month were cancelled due to the pandemic. However, we had a surprisingly good turnout for our CAPM ribbon contest! A blank ribbon was included in our agency's March newsletter, along with the guidelines, and students were encouraged to send their finished artwork to our office. Winners will receive a \$30 Visa gift card; thank you to all who entered! Here are the winners in each age category:



Brett Ritenour
Age 5



Morgan Downey
Age 10



Nixie Shawn
Age 13