

Elder Abuse Information

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According to the 2004 Survey of State Adult Protective Services, the majority (89.3%) of elder abuse occurs in a domestic setting, and 52.7% of alleged perpetrators are female (Administration on Aging, 2004).

Elder abuse is defined as a single or repeated act or a lack of appropriate action occurring in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which can harm or distress an older person (Dyer & Rowe, 1999).

Abuse is not easily discerned and can be in the form of physical, emotional, or material which includes financial abuse. Non-action such as neglect can also be a factor in defining abuse (Reis, 2000).

Elder abuse is not only an act against the victim, but it is also an anti-social act against the entire community; therefore, some states have enacted statues that criminalize various acts of elder abuse (Heisler, 2000).

The American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly and the National Association of Women Judges developed a three-day training session on elder abuse; judges and court staff have been trained in Tennessee, Illinois, Florida, Washington,, Georgia, Ohio, and Wisconsin (Stiegel, 2000).

Social Workers or case managers facilitating support groups for caregivers under stress must be aware that some caregivers in groups may be guilty of abusive actions; therefore, social workers face the ethical decision of being required by law to report suspicion of abuse and keeping the confidentiality of a client which is a very important legal concern for social workers (Bergeron & Gray, 2003).