

# RECOGNIZE, REPORT AND PREVENT ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION



# REPORT ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

Being able to recognize the signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child, an individual with developmental disabilities, or other vulnerable adult is extremely important in protecting members of our society. Everyone should report signs that indicate a child, an individual with developmental disabilities, or other vulnerable adult may be the victim of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation (maltreatment). Many times, however, signs go unreported because the survivor or witness:

- Did not know how or where to make a report
- Believe nothing will happen
- Feel threatened, afraid or intimidated
- Did not realize what was happening
- Did not want to get involved

Making a report can mean life or death for a victim of maltreatment in certain instances. It is not your duty to investigate abuse, neglect or exploitation, but if you have a reasonable suspicion, you shall report it. (A.R.S. § 13-3620)

<https://dcs.az.gov/report-child-abuse>

<https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/adult-protective-services>

## What is Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation?

### ► ***Everyone has the right to be safe.***

This means trust your gut or feelings. TELL SOMEONE you trust who can help you even if you are unsure. Tell someone else if things do not get better. Keep telling people until someone helps you.

Consent means saying yes or you agree. You said it was OK to have a person be in your personal space. Personal space is your private area around your body. People need to ask you first before they do anything in your personal space.

Abuse can be many things. Not all abuse can be seen. Abuse is unwelcomed touch or entering your personal space without your consent. This is when you would say NO! Don't touch me or do that. TELL SOMEONE if this happens to you!

**Abuse** can take many forms. Not all abuse is seen with the naked eye. All of these can be abuse:



- Physical abuse means unwelcomed contact like hitting or touching and hurting someone on purpose
- Sexual abuse or sexual assault means unwanted, forced touching and actions in your private parts
- Unreasonable confinement means using unnecessary restraints of any kind or isolation
- Verbal abuse means not being talked to in a nice way, using words that hurt your feelings and are mean. Others using pressure to make you do something you don't want to do. Using words to hurt someone because of their race, culture, disability, or life choices

**Neglect** is not giving someone what they need to live. This includes:



- Food
- Water
- Medication – The pills and treatments you take to stay healthy and manage your medical needs
- Home and Community Based Services – Help from people and agencies to make sure you feel safe, healthy, and living the life you want
- Physical and Mental Health care services like doctors, nurses, therapy, hospitals, social workers, counselors
- Shelter – a safe place to stay or live. It could be your house, group home, apartment, or motorhome
- Cooling – Air Conditioning (AC)
- Heating
- Supervision – When someone who is responsible to keep you safe ignores you or your needs

**Exploitation** is when another person uses you or your things without your okay to only help them and not you. This can include:



- Misusing or spending your money, credit cards or bank accounts on things for themselves or things you don't need
- Stealing or taking your money, things or property
- Forced begging – This means: someone makes you ask others over and over for things or money to give to them
- Prostitution – This means: Someone forces you to use your body for sex to get money or things





Abuse, neglect and exploitation can occur for many reasons. Also, individuals can be victimized by friends, family members or strangers.

Below are factors that can cause abuse, neglect, or exploitation:

- **Caregiver stress:** People who do not have the needed skills or resources and who are not prepared to be a caregiver may suffer from stress which may lead to abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- **Dependency:** People in poor health are more likely to be abused than those who are in relatively good health. Caregivers who rely on the monetary resources of the older adult are also more likely to abuse.
- **External stress:** Experiencing money problems, job stress and family problems can trigger people to abuse or neglect others upon whom they rely.
- **Social isolation:** Social isolation is both a sign of potential abuse and a contributing cause.
- **Intergenerational violence:** When violence is a learned form of normal behavior in childhood, it can be expressed in adulthood. This means if a person grew up around violence, they may be more likely to be violent with their own family or someone for whom they are caring.
- **Personal problems of the abuser:** People who have problems like alcoholism, substance abuse or behavioral health problems are more likely to become an abuser than those who do not.

# PREVENTING ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

The most important factor in preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation is to accept that no one, at any age, should be the victim of violent, abusive, humiliating or neglectful behavior. In addition, there are many things that individuals, families and communities can do to prevent abuse, neglect or exploitation.



## Individuals should:

- Stay social as you age. Maintain and increase your network of friends.
- Keep in contact with old friends and neighbors. If you move in with a relative or change your address, share that information with them.
- Create a "buddy system" with a friend outside the home. Plan for weekly contact and share openly with this person.
- Ask friends to visit you at home. Even a brief visit can positively impact your well-being.
- Accept opportunities for new activities. They can bring new friends.
- Partake in activities in your community.
- Volunteer or become a member of an organization. Contribute regularly.
- Possess your own telephone and make regular calls to family and friends.
- Post and open your own mail. If your mail is being intercepted, discuss the problem with postal authorities.
- Stay organized. Keep your belongings neat and orderly. Make sure trusted others are aware that you know where everything is kept in case of emergency.
- Take care of your personal needs. Keep regular medical, dental, and other personal appointments.
- Plan to have your Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, or pension check deposited directly to your bank account.
- Get legal advice about actions you can take for possible future impairments. This includes powers of attorney, guardianships or conservatorships.
- Keep records, accounts, and property available for review by someone you trust, as well as by the person you or the court chose to manage your affairs.
- Review your will and other legal documents periodically.
- Give up control of your property or assets only when you decide you cannot manage them. Ask for help when you need it. Discuss your plans with your attorney, physician, or family members.



## Individuals should NOT:

- Live with a person who has a background of violent behavior, alcohol or drug abuse.
- Leave your home unattended.
- Leave cash, jewelry, or prized possessions lying about.
- Accept personal care in return for transfer or assignments of your property or assets unless a lawyer, advocate, or another trusted person acts as a witness to the transaction.
- Sign a document unless someone you trust has reviewed it.
- Allow anyone else to keep details of your finances or property management from you.

# PREVENTING ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION



## Families should:

- Maintain close ties with aging relatives and friends. Be aware of changes in their health and ability to live independently in case of incapacitation.
- Discuss an older relative's wishes about:
  - Health care
  - Terminal medical care substitutes
  - Home care
  - Ownership of their personal assets
- Find sources of help and use them. Many communities have the following resources:
  - Errand services
  - Housekeeping
  - Home-delivered meals
  - Senior recreation
  - Care during the day
  - Respite care
  - Transportation assistance
  - Medication management
- Discuss and create a plan with a lawyer, advocate, or another trusted person on how the following financial assets should be handled before the person becomes incapacitated:
  - Financial records
  - Bank accounts
  - Will
  - Safe deposit boxes
  - Insurance
  - Debts
  - Sources of income
  - Trusts
- Anticipate potential incapacitation. Create a family plan regarding who will take responsibility for such matters as:
  - Power of Attorney
  - In-home caregiving
- Closely examine your family's ability to provide long-term, in-home care for a dependent relative. Consider the family's physical limits.



- Plan how your own needs will be met when your responsibility for the dependent relative increases.
- Explore alternative sources of care in case your situation changes such as:
  - Group homes
  - Nursing homes
  - Other relative's homes
- Discuss your plans with friends, neighbors, and other support systems before your responsibilities become a burden. Ask for their understanding and emotional support as you may need them.
- Familiarize family members with emergency response agencies and services available in case of sudden need.



## Families should NOT:

- Offer personal home care unless you carefully understand and can meet the physical responsibilities and costs involved.
- Wait until a person has moved in with you to examine their needs. You will need to think about access, safety, containment, and special needs. For example:
  - Do you need a first-floor accessible bathroom, bedroom or entry ramp?
  - Will rugs, carpets or stairs become barriers?
  - Do you need door alarms or a fenced yard to prevent the loved one from wandering away?
  - Does your kitchen allow you to prepare special diets properly?
  - Can you move the person safely in case of fire?
  - Do you need safety locks to secure dangerous medications or chemicals?
  - Do motor vehicles need to be disabled or keys hidden for unsafe drivers?
- Assume that poor interpersonal relationships between you or other members of the household and the older person involved will disappear.
- Expect irritating habits or problems such as alcohol abuse to stop or be controlled once the person moves into your home.
- Ignore your limitations and over-extend yourself.
- Restrict the person's independence or intrude unnecessarily upon their privacy.
- Label your efforts a failure if home care is not possible and you must seek an alternative.

# RECOGNIZING ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION

These signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation may be something you can see or a person may try to hide.

## Physical Indicators

- **Bruises** - black and blue marks on your body that sometimes hurt to touch.
- **Burns** - burns happen when something hot touches you and leaves a painful mark on your body.
- **Body injuries** including binding marks caused by being tied up, bite marks, bone breaks, bed sores and stomach injuries.

## Behavioral Indicators (*The ways people act*)

- **Withdrawal from friends or usual activities**  
This means you stop doing things you like to do or things that make you feel good about yourself. This may include you not hanging out with your friends or family.
- **Anger**  
Anger is a strong feeling. It may cause you to yell or be mad at people. You can feel like you are not in physical control and do bad things to people or things you love.
- **Hyperactivity**  
Having a lot of energy that is hard to control.
- **Suicidal thoughts or attempts**  
This means you want to kill yourself and end your life. You may feel the only way to make painful feelings stop is to end your life. Tell someone how you feel.
- **Change in appetite**  
This means your desire or want to eat food has changed and you eat more, less or not at all.
- **Low self-esteem or depression**  
This means you do not see yourself in a good way. Your thoughts about yourself are not nice. You do not see your life in a positive way.
- **Use/Abuse of alcohol or other drugs**  
This means you use too much alcohol, medication or illegal drugs to make yourself feel better.

- **Obsessive or compulsive behavior**

Repeated and unwanted thoughts or urges. Repeated acts that you feel you have to do a certain way.

- **Sleep disturbances**

This means a change in how or when you go to sleep or if you stay asleep.

- **Fear** of a particular place or being with a specific person.

## Living and Environmental Indicators

- **Odors**

This means you may stop taking baths or stop taking trash out.

- **Filthy and cluttered living space**

This means you may become messy and stop cleaning.

- **Infestations** (rodent, insect, etc.)

This means there is a large amount of bugs or pests in your home.

- **Safety concerns**

This means you keep certain items in your room to make you feel safe (bat, fork, knife). A new need to keep the door locked.

- **Hoarding situations** (animal, items, etc.)

This means you buy or collect things you don't need to make yourself feel better or safe.

- **Absence** of food in refrigerator or cupboards

- **No** running water

- **Lack of working utilities**

This means there is no air conditioner, heat, or electricity in your home.



# REPORT ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION

Suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation should be reported immediately.  
Call 911 if the victim is in immediate danger.



## — Individuals Under 18 Years of Age

Reports should be submitted to the Arizona Department of Child Safety  
Report via phone: 1-888-SOS-CHILD (1-888-767-2445)  
Visit [dcs.az.gov/report-child-abuse](https://dcs.az.gov/report-child-abuse) for more information.

Information required when making a report:

- Name, age, and gender of child and other family members
- Address, phone numbers, and/or directions to child's home
- Parents' place of employment
- Description of suspected abuse or neglect
- Current condition of the child

## + Individuals Over 18 Years of Age

Reports should be submitted to the Arizona Department of Economic Security –  
Adult Protective Services.

Report via phone:

1-877-SOS-ADULT (1-877-767-2385)

Monday – Friday: 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sunday & State Holidays: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Report Online:

Online reporting is available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

Information required when making a report:

- Adult's name, age and gender
- Address of adult's home
- Medical or mental diagnosis if known
- Physical and mental limitations or concerns
- Whether their condition limits their ability to protect themselves
- Suspected maltreatment
- Details about alleged perpetrator

***Make a report even if you don't have all the information they are asking for!  
Even if you are unsure.***



**Adult Protective Services: 1-877-SOS-ADULT (1-877-767-2385)**

# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER MAKING A REPORT

## Arizona Department of Child Safety

When the Department of Child Safety (DCS) receives an abuse, neglect or exploitation report that meets the standards for response, a local DCS Specialist is assigned to investigate. The DCS Specialist will interview the child, other children in the home, parents, and others in the home who may have details about the child's safety. They may also interview relatives, neighbors, teachers, doctors, and friends. After all details are gathered, the DCS Specialist and the DCS Supervisor review the facts and decide the next steps to take. A determination of services is made to reduce the risk to the child.

After the investigation, the DCS team decides if the report should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Substantiated means that the details gathered support a finding of child abuse or neglect. DCS may provide services to the family or refer them to services in the local community. Unsubstantiated means the details gathered do not support a finding of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation.



## Arizona Department of Economic Security – Adult Protective Services

After an individual submits a report to APS, the report is analyzed and a determination regarding the need for an investigation is made. If the report meets the criteria for an investigation, the report is routed to an APS field office and is assigned to an investigator. If the report does not meet the criteria for an investigation, the reporter will be referred to other community and local organizations for additional services by an APS customer service representative.

The investigator assigned to the incident will first make contact with the vulnerable adult identified in the report at their residence to assess their safety including living conditions and immediate health needs. The investigator and the adult along with their representative will create a safety plan if safety threats are identified. Additionally, the investigator will conduct a risk assessment to determine the probability of abuse, neglect or maltreatment recurring.

The investigator will then interview the alleged perpetrator identified in the report face-to-face to gather additional information about the allegations. After obtaining this information, the investigator may interview additional witnesses or obtain other records necessary to the investigation. APS does not have the legal authority to control a vulnerable adult's finances or relocate them against his or her will. Vulnerable adults may refuse to participate in the investigation or other services offered when they have cognitive capacity. If APS has concerns regarding the individual's cognitive capacity, the investigator will pursue further assessment via a healthcare professional and they may make a referral to a public fiduciary to assume the role of guardian or conservator.

A recommendation to substantiate the allegation is made if after the completion of the investigation, the investigator in consultation with their supervisor, determines if the evidence concludes there is at least a 51% likelihood the alleged perpetrator was responsible for the abuse, neglect or exploitation reported. If the allegation is substantiated, the information is submitted and referred to the Arizona Attorney General's (AG) office. The AG's office will make a final determination whether or not to substantiate the allegation. If the AG's office substantiates the allegation, APS notifies the alleged perpetrator at which point they can request an administrative hearing. At the hearing a determination will be made by an administrative law judge who provides a ruling per A.R.S. 46-458. The perpetrator's name is placed on the APS registry if the judge upholds the substantiation and it is approved by the Director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

Details of the case may be shared if the report is substantiated and charges are filed against the perpetrator who will face the charges in court. However, APS follows the Arizona Confidentiality Statute, A.R.S. § 46-460, and does not release information unless specified by law.

## Special Thanks To:

- Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)
- Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS)
- Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES)
- Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS)
- Arizona Council of Human Service Providers
- Arizona Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council (DDAC)
- Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC)
- Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care
- Arizona Association for Providers for Persons with Disabilities (AAPPD)
- Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Arizona Health Care Association
- Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL)
- American Association for Retired People (AARP)
- The Arc of Arizona
- Arizona Autism Coalition
- Autism Society of Greater Phoenix
- Raising Special Kids
- Ability360
- Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center
- H.O.P.E. Group
- Vitalyst Health Foundation
- MGA Home Care
- The Tunglund Corporation
- Mercy Care
- Banner University Health Plans
- Care 1st/WellCare Health Plans



This information is provided on behalf of the Governor of Arizona as a result of Executive Order 2019-03, Enhanced Protections for Individuals with Disabilities.

Equal Opportunity Employer / Program • Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities • TTY/TDD Services 7-1-1 • Disponible en español en línea o en la oficina local