

## Going Home for the Holidays?

## Would you know the signs of neglect or abuse? Learn them

## here...



Prepare a checklist of things to look out for and to discuss with your elderly loved one. It might include questions such as:

- Does an elderly loved one require help with chores or housekeeping, bathing, dressing, shopping and meal preparation, managing money, transportation or medications?
- Are they isolated? How often do they socialize with others?
- If living with another, are they dependent on that person for care? Is that person an appropriate caregiver? Does the caregiver understand the medical conditions that the elder has?
- During your visit, keep an eye out for warning signs of self-neglect, or abuse or neglect by others (see below). Remember that most elder abusers are related to the older person.
- If, before you make your trip, you suspect that your loved one needs extra assistance, plan a longer stay so that you can visit local aging service organizations, physicians and attorneys during regular work hours.

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### Some warning signs to look out for:

#### SELF-NEGLECT

If the senior lives alone and does not have anyone providing assistance, self-neglect may become an issue. Some things to look for include:

- Senior appears confused
- Senior is no longer able to handle meal preparation, bathing, bill paying, etc.
- Senior seems depressed
- Senior is drinking too much or is abusing drugs
- Senior is falling frequently
- Senior appears undernourished, dehydrated, under-medicated, or is not getting care for problems with eyesight, hearing, dental problems, incontinence, etc.

## NEGLECT OR ABUSE BY OTHERS

If the senior lives with others or has someone coming in to help, neglect or abuse may become an issue. Some things to look for include:

- Presence of “new best friend” who is willing to care for the senior for little or no cost
- Recent changes in banking or spending patterns
- Older person is isolated from friends and family
- Caregiver has problems with drugs, alcohol, anger and/or emotional instability
- Caregiver is financially dependent on the older person
- Family pet seems neglected or abused
- You find an abundance of mail and/or phone solicitations for money (“You’re a winner!”)
- Senior seems afraid of the caregiver
- Senior has unexplained bruises, cuts, etc.
- Senior has “bed sores” (pressure sores from lying in one place for too long)
- Senior appears dirty, undernourished, dehydrated, over- or under-medicated, or is not receiving needed care for problems with eyesight, hearing, dental issues, or incontinence.

## What should you do?

- If you suspect your older loved one is at risk and he/she lives in the community, call your local Adult Protective Services or Office on Aging. If the person lives in a licensed facility, call the local Long-term Care Ombudsman. You can find the numbers for your state at [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov).
- Introduce yourself to responsible neighbors and friends. Give them your address and phone numbers in case of an emergency.
- Ask your elderly loved ones directly if they are afraid of anyone, if anyone is taking things without their permission; if anyone is asking them to do things they are not comfortable with, or if anyone is humiliating them. These screening questions may reveal hidden anxieties caused by abuse or neglect.

## RESOURCES

National Center on Elder Abuse: [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov)

Ageless Alliance: [www.agelessalliance.org](http://www.agelessalliance.org)

Eldercare Locator: [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) This toll-free service operates Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Eastern time) and can be reached at 1-800-677-1116.