

## Elder Abuse, Self-Neglect:

### How to Spot + Report It

The Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) works to empower older adults and those living with disabilities to age strong. We provide an array of programs and supports that help people to stay healthy and safe.

We recognize that home isn't a safe place for everyone, however. Sadly, many of our neighbors confront daily acts of violence or abuse in the home – a situation which can be exacerbated during times of physical distancing. Our Elder Rights & Safety (ERS) unit investigates complaints of abuse and self-neglect of people 60 years of age and older. And we work collaboratively with law enforcement agencies on suspected cases of financial exploitation.

It is important to note that adults have the right to make choices, good or bad, about their lives. OHA does not have the authority to physically separate a person from other people or places.

State law requires any person who suspects elder abuse, exploitation, or self-neglect to report it to OHA. Due to a recent update to Rhode Island's Mandatory Reporting Law, §42-66-8, there are more services available to survivors of abuse who present at healthcare facilities.

Suspected abuse in a long-term care setting should be reported to Rhode Island's Long-Term Care Ombudsman at 401-785-3340. Our volunteer guardianship program is available for persons who reside in long-term care facilities and who need a healthcare decision maker.

Report suspected elder abuse  
and/or self-neglect anytime to:



**401-462-0555**

*Reports can be filed anonymously*

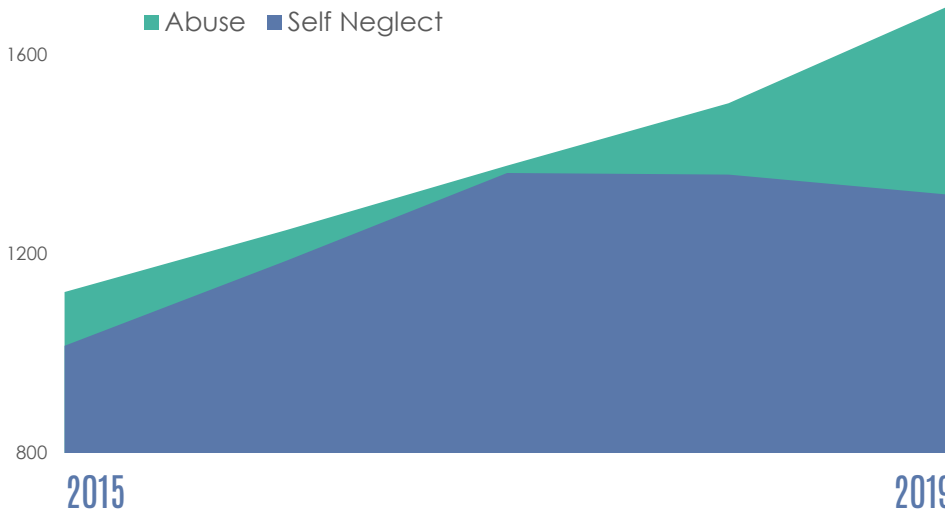
The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as an act, or lack of action, occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This includes physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse; financial, material abuse; abandonment; and neglect.

## the **SIGNS** to look for in a person

- Lacks basic hygiene, adequate food, or clean and appropriate clothing
- Lives in a home that is cluttered, filthy, or in disrepair
- Exhibits uncharacteristic or unexplained behavior changes
- Has unexplained fractures, bruises, welts, cuts, sores or burns
- Has unexplained sexually transmitted disease(s)
- Confined to bed without care and/or has untreated "bed" sores
- Money is controlled by caregiver, but caregiver is failing to provide for the person's needs
- Isolated by a caregiver and/or the caregiver is verbally aggressive or demeaning to the person
- Has dementia and is left unsupervised

# Founded Elder Abuse & Self-Neglect Cases

Source: OHA, Statewide Data



Cases of abuse and exploitation are on the rise. The number of substantiated elder abuse cases in Rhode Island increased by more than 34 percent between 2015 and 2019.

So far in 2020, we've seen a decrease in elder abuse reporting. This is not to suggest that incidents of abuse have decreased. The pandemic dramatically interrupted normal business practices and our connections to each other.

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE



Report elder abuse and/or self-neglect online at [www.oha.ri.gov](http://www.oha.ri.gov) or call 401.462.0555. If you are in immediate danger and cannot speak on the phone, text **9-1-1** with your location.



Help is available if and when you need it. Please use the resources listed on the right if you need support or services.

Access resources for survivors of violence by calling the Victims of Crime Helpline at 1.800.494.8100 or by visiting [tinyurl.com/SafeAtHomeRI](http://tinyurl.com/SafeAtHomeRI). If you have general questions about resources for older adults, call the Point Helpdesk at 401.462.4444.