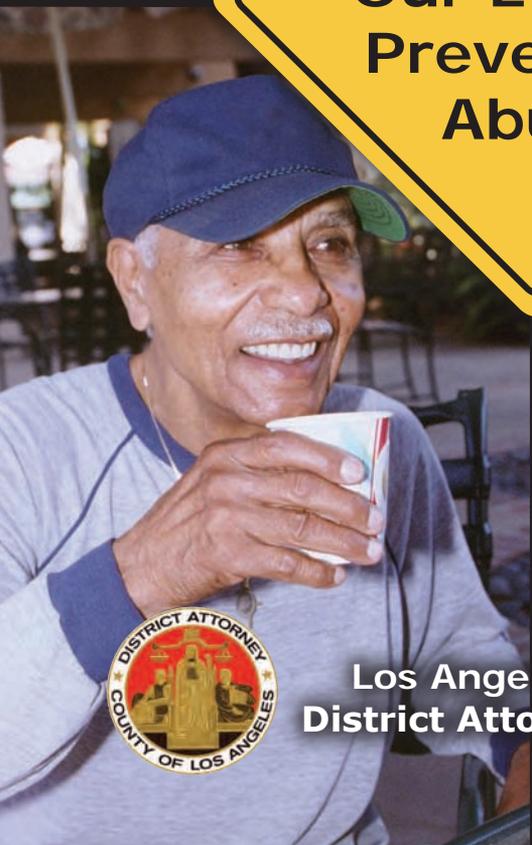


**Respecting  
Our Elders –  
Preventing  
Abuse**



**Los Angeles County  
District Attorney's Office**

---

## Message from the District Attorney



**E**lder abuse is a rapidly growing criminal problem in Los Angeles County with roughly 15,000 cases reported each year. As the baby boom generation grays and life expectancy increases, incidents of physical, psychological and financial abuse against elders will skyrocket unless steps are

taken to protect this community.

The number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to grow 60 percent by 2025. In Los Angeles County, the senior population is estimated to double – to more than 3 million – by 2030.

In addition, 70 percent of the wealth in the United States is in the hands of the elderly. As we all know, where there is a lot of money, there will be criminals trying to steal it.

Elders are vulnerable. Much of the abuse they suffer – sadly, sometimes at the hands of family members – goes undetected. Data suggest that only 1 in 14 such incidents is reported to authorities.

The information in this booklet is intended to make you and your family aware of what elder abuse is, why it occurs, how to identify it and what can be done to stop it.

---

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office was the first prosecutorial office in the United States to establish an Elder Abuse Unit with attorneys specially trained and dedicated to prosecuting crimes against the elderly. This nationally renowned unit has prosecuted nursing homes, board and care facilities, family members, business professionals and fraud rings. Our prosecutors also advise and train other professionals on emerging elder abuse issues.

As District Attorney, I am committed to protecting our seniors. We can fight elder abuse together. If you are concerned that a senior is being victimized, please contact your local law enforcement agency or the Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Hotline 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Cooley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**Steve Cooley**  
**District Attorney**  
**Los Angeles County**

## Elder Abuse – A Shameful Act, A Serious Crime

Elder abuse is cruel and despicable, and it is a serious crime under California law. This crime is punishable by up to four years in state prison or even longer if it involves great bodily injury, death of a victim or theft of large amounts of money.

These cases of elder abuse, prosecuted by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, illustrate the devastating nature of this crime:

■ A 94-year-old woman who suffered from Alzheimer's disease was so severely neglected by her son that she developed malnutrition, dehydration and deep bedsores that caused infection and contributed to her death. The victim received no medical care during the last two years of her life. The 60-year-old son was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison.

■ A 33-year-old woman met an 83-year-old widower who suffered from dementia. They married, and within months, she had drained his assets, sold his home and moved him to New York. The man died before his wife was convicted of bilking more than \$700,000 from him. She was sentenced to five

years in prison.  
■ A con artist who posed as a cop swindled thousands of dollars from elderly women through a devious telephone scam.

He told victims their identification had been stolen and tricked them into paying \$3,000 or more to a nonexistent "Senior Registry" supposedly to "protect their credit." He was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison.

■ A 46-year-old woman left her 86-year-old mother alone for several days in a filthy trash-filled home with little, if any, food. The elderly woman suffered dehydration and serious bedsores, indicating previous neglect. The daughter was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison.

### For Help Call:

Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Hotline  
1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646)



---

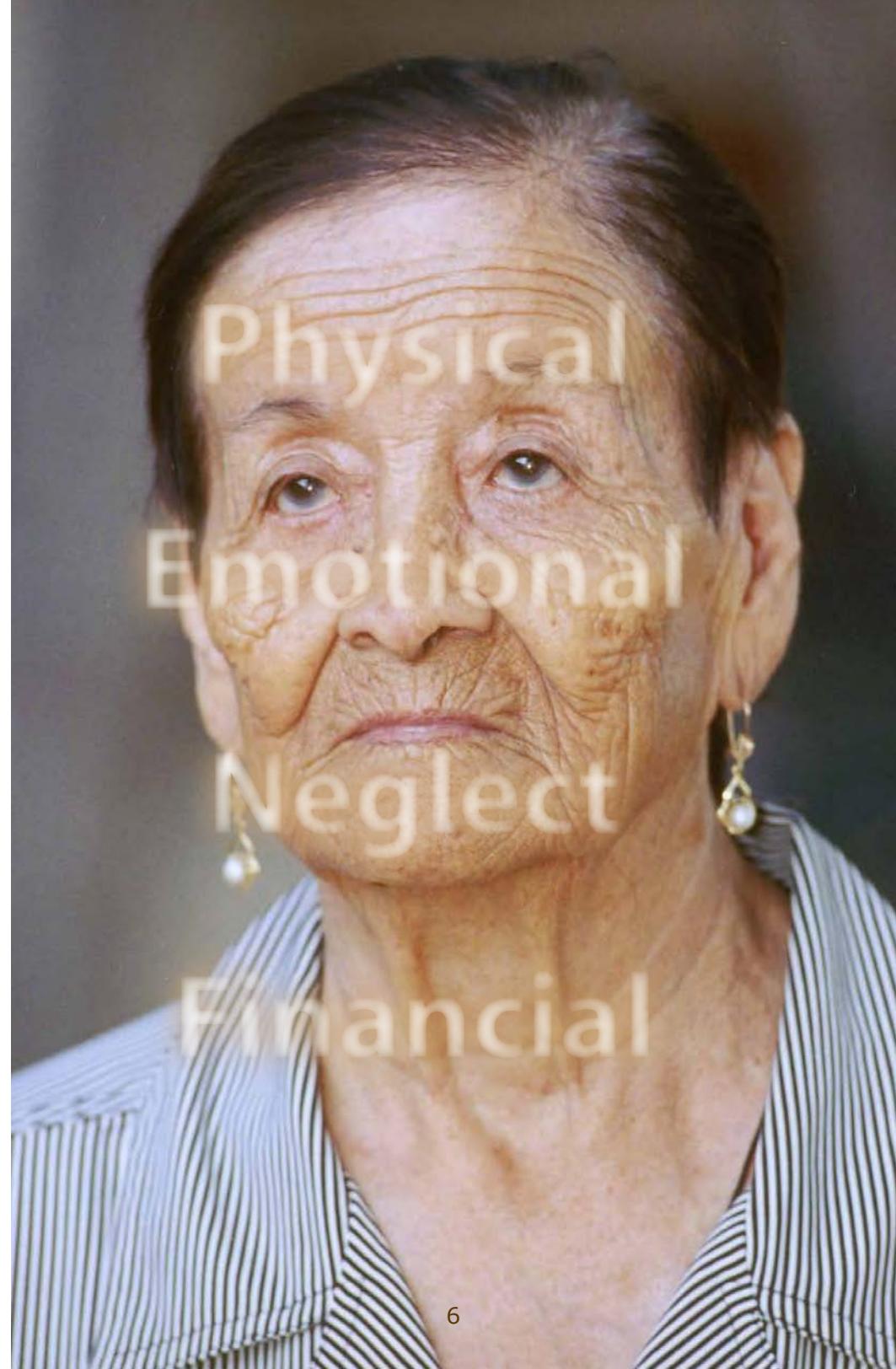
## What is Elder Abuse?

**E**lder abuse is the neglect, exploitation or painful or harmful mistreatment of a person age 65 or older (or a dependent adult, 18-64, who is physically or mentally impaired) by any person, group, organization or enterprise. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, isolation and financial abuse.

Elder abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of income level, living situation, race, ethnicity, religion or social status. While elder abuse is sometimes perpetrated by a stranger, it is a disturbing fact that often a senior's family member, close friend or caretaker is responsible. For this reason, elder abuse can be difficult to detect, and when it is discovered, it can be hard to accept.

California law allows for prosecution of elder abuse even if it is not immediately discovered or reported. Physical abuse, neglect and false imprisonment may be prosecuted up to five years after the occurrence, and financial abuse may be prosecuted up to four years after its discovery.

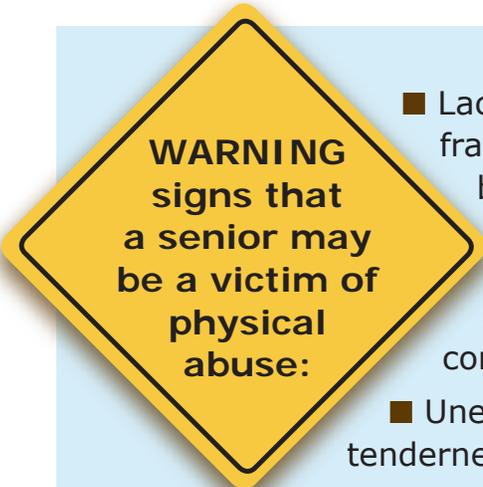
In addition, any person convicted of elder abuse or neglect or elder homicide is prohibited from inheriting, controlling, administering or taking anything from the victim's estate, even if the convict was a named beneficiary in the victim's will or trust.



---

## Physical Abuse

**P**hysical abuse is the intentional infliction of discomfort, pain or bodily injury on an elder. Seniors, their loved ones, caretakers or any witnesses should immediately report physical abuse or suspected physical abuse to police by calling 911 or call the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646).



**WARNING  
signs that  
a senior may  
be a victim of  
physical  
abuse:**

- Lacerations, abrasions, fractures, welts, bruises, discoloration or swelling not associated with a known medical condition or treatment
- Unexplained pain or tenderness on mere touch
- Burns caused by cigarettes or ropes or other restraints
- Detached retina, bleeding or scalp wound
- Elder becomes withdrawn or seems unusually protective of a suspected abuser

---

## Emotional Abuse

**E**motional abuse can result from verbal assaults, threats, intimidation, humiliation or isolation and can cause psychological and emotional trauma. Verbal threats, insults, intimidation, shouting and other acts of rage directed at a senior are not acceptable, even if carried out by a child, spouse, friend or caretaker. Seniors, caretakers or loved ones may report any psychological abuse they experience or witness to the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646) or to police. Seniors should not blame themselves for the emotionally abusive behavior of others.



**WARNING  
signs that  
a senior may  
be a victim of  
emotional  
abuse:**

- Seems depressed, sad or withdrawn
- Displays unusual mood swings or anger
- Appears afraid of being touched or approached by others
- Seems unusually introverted, fearful or shies away from contact

---

## Neglect

**N**eglect is the failure by a caregiver to provide the senior with basic needs, comforts, services or assistance. These include food, shelter, medical care, personal hygiene products, heat or air conditioning. Such neglect should be reported to the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646). Adult children, especially those with histories of mental illness, substance abuse or criminal activity, may be inclined to neglect their elder parents. It is prudent to avoid placing a senior's care in the hands of an adult child with these types of problems.

### Protective Steps:

- Drop in on the senior unexpectedly to see how he/she is being cared for when the caregiver is not expecting a visitor.
- Before placing a senior in a nursing home or care facility, first visit the place without an appointment to observe its typical conditions and practices. Check the facility's record of complaints and/or violations with the California Department of Public Health. (Contact information is provided on page 13.)
- If hiring an unlicensed caretaker to provide home-care, ask for multiple references and check them carefully. If hiring a licensed professional to provide home-care, check his/her credentials with state licensing authorities. (Contact information is on page 13.)

- 
- Seems to be isolated by a caretaker and unable to speak freely or spend time with others
  - Appears unwashed, unkempt, poorly groomed or wears soiled, ill-fitting or inappropriate clothing
  - Appears to be dehydrated or malnourished
  - An unusual or sudden weight loss
  - Does not have necessities, including medications, eyeglasses, dentures, prostheses, hearing aids, canes, walkers or other critical items

Another form of neglect is self-neglect. Self-neglect is the inability of an elder who does not have a caretaker to provide for himself/herself. Self-neglect is not a crime. However, seniors can seek help through the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646).

---

## Financial Abuse

**F**inancial abuse is the mismanagement, misuse or theft of money, property or other assets belonging to a senior. It also can involve the use, manipulation or appropriation of a senior's financial resources without his/her consent.

Consent means the senior must understand the true nature and consequences of the transaction and must have the mental capacity to make a rational and intelligent choice.

A senior's consent must be given freely, apart from undue influence by another person. A senior's mere passivity, or lack of objection, does not constitute consent under the law.

Anyone who has access to a senior's personal information, such as bank account numbers, credit cards, checkbooks or investment records, can potentially steal from him/her. Seniors are advised to guard personal information closely and avoid sharing it with anyone other than a most trusted adviser. Seniors can and should take steps to protect themselves.

### Protective Steps:

- Destroy credit cards that are not in use.
- Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) for ATM and credit cards or investment accounts should not be stored in a wallet or purse. If written down, PINs should be stored in a separate secure location.
- ATM or credit cards should never be shared with

others. Housebound seniors should consider using checks to pay or reimburse others for purchases. If it is necessary to obtain cash, write a check to a trusted adviser and ask him/her to cash it and return with the money.

- Bank and credit card statements should be reviewed monthly to assure they are accurate. If unauthorized or unfamiliar withdrawals or charges appear on any statement, the bank or credit card company should be notified immediately.
- Suspected financial abuse should be reported to the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646) or to police.

- Unusual activity occurs in his/her bank or credit accounts, especially numerous withdrawals or an attempt to withdraw a large sum of money.

- A senior's bills start piling up when a caretaker is supposed to be paying them.

- A senior discovers there has been a change in his/her will or power of attorney designation that he/she did not authorize.

- A senior appears to lack necessities or amenities, such as clothing and grooming items, even though he/she has the means to afford such items.

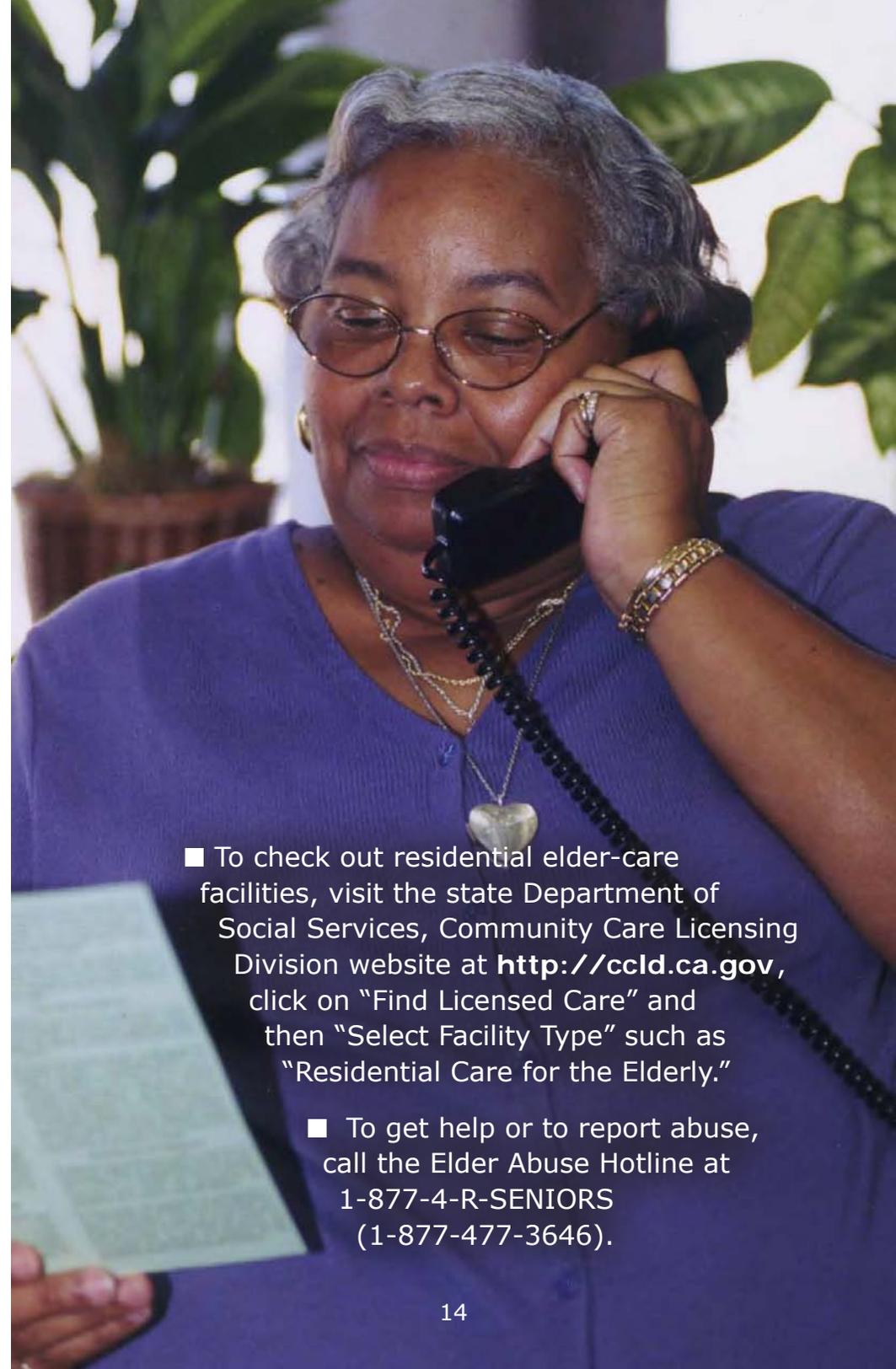


**WARNING**  
signs that  
a senior may  
be a victim of  
**financial**  
abuse:

---

## Safe Senior Care Resources

- To find out if a nursing home or care facility has a history of complaints or citations for faulty care, visit this California Department of Public Health web page: <http://hfcis.cdph.ca.gov/servicesAndFacilities.aspx> or call the Health Facilities Inspection Division at 1-800-228-1019.
- To find out if a facility has been cited for negligence resulting in a patient's death, visit this CDPH web page: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/facilities/Pages/AACounties.aspx> or call the Health Facilities Inspection Division at 1-800-228-1019.
- Nursing home quality ratings are posted on this website: <http://www.medicare.gov>, go to "Search Tools" on left menu and click on "Compare Nursing Homes in Your Area."
- To check the credentials of a doctor, registered or vocational nurse or other medical professional, visit the state Department of Consumer Affairs "License Lookup" web page at: [http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery\\$.startup](http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery$.startup). Professions are listed in alphabetical order.
- The credentials of a home health aide or certified nurse assistant may be checked at this CDPH web page: <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/cvl/SearchPage.aspx> or call 1-916-327-2445 to request help.



- To check out residential elder-care facilities, visit the state Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division website at <http://cclid.ca.gov>, click on "Find Licensed Care" and then "Select Facility Type" such as "Residential Care for the Elderly."
- To get help or to report abuse, call the Elder Abuse Hotline at 1-877-4-R-SENIORS (1-877-477-3646).



Prepared by the  
District Attorney's Bureau of Community Relations  
October 2009