

# Adult Protective Services

*Last night  
Harriet's  
daughter  
hit her.  
Again.*





# Adult Protective Services

Every year thousands of older and dependent adults suffer from abuse, neglect or exploitation. They're living in their own homes, apartments and with their families. Most of them are suffering in silence. *The facts are alarming!*

Adult Protective Services (APS) receives calls every day concerning possible abuse of elderly or dependent adults in our community. In 1999, Contra Costa County's APS responded to an average of 70 calls per month. In 2004, APS received an average of 176 reports of abuse each month. Experts estimate, however, that at least four times as many incidents go unreported as those that are reported and substantiated.

## Why do so many incidents of abuse go unreported?

Often people don't know when or where to go for help. In other cases, denial, fear or shame keeps abuse a secret. *The only real shame is not reporting cases of possible abuse, neglect or exploitation.*

Adult Protective Services provides needed assistance to elderly and dependent adults who are victims of physical, emotional or financial harm or abuse 24 hours a day.

There's a need for APS whenever a person over age 65 or a dependent individual between the ages of 18 and 64 is in danger, is unable to protect their interests, is unable to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation by others, or is physically or mentally incapable of managing daily activities.

- **In 1990, 110 allegations of abuse were made to Contra Costa County's Adult Protective Services (APS). In 1999, the number of allegations reached 900—an 818% increase in 10 years.**
- **Each month Contra Costa County's APS agency handles more than 340 active cases relating to the abuse of elders and dependent adults.**
- **Confirmed reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation reveal that 90% of the incidents involve a family member. In two-thirds of the cases, the person responsible for the abuse is an adult child or spouse.**
- **Individuals, 80 years and older, suffer from abuse and neglect two to three times their proportion to the older population. In Contra Costa County, the fastest growing segment of the population is the 85+ age group. Over the next ten years, the 65+ age group is expected to increase 37%; the 85+ segment is predicted to skyrocket by 55%.**

## Defining Abuse

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** includes slapping, hitting, bruising, beating or any other intentional act that causes someone physical pain, injury or suffering. Physical abuse also includes excessive forms of restraint used to confine someone against their will (i.e. tying, chaining or locking someone in a room).

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** is threatening, intimidating or humiliating an individual and causing them emotional pain, distress or anguish. Emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal; it includes insults, yelling and threats of harm or isolation.

**SEXUAL ABUSE** consists of engaging in any sexual activity to which the older or dependent adult does not consent or is incapable of consenting. Non-consensual sexual activity includes everything from exhibitionism to sexual intercourse.

**FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL EXPLOITATION** is when someone misuses, mishandles or exploits the elderly or dependent adult's property, possessions or financial assets. This includes using those assets without the individual's consent or manipulating the older or dependent adult for the financial benefit or material gain of another.

**NEGLECT** takes place when, intentionally or unintentionally, a caregiver fails to support the physical, emotional and social needs of the older or dependent adult. Neglect can include denying food or medication, health services or contact with friends or family. Neglect is the most common form of elder mistreatment in domestic settings.

**ABANDONMENT** is when a caregiver deserts the elderly or dependent person.

**SELF-NEGLECT** requires intervention when elderly or dependent adults fail to meet their physical, psychological or social needs and/or threaten their health or safety in any way. Often times, physical or mental illness, isolation and substance abuse prevents elderly or dependent adults from being able to take care of their own basic needs.

## How APS Works...

1. A call...Someone makes a confidential call to APS if they believe an elderly or dependent adult is in immediate danger or at risk of being harmed. All calls to APS are confidential.
2. An assessment...A trained case worker responds to and investigates the report, assesses the situation and works to address situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
3. A plan...As appropriate, an intervention and support plan is developed using the least restrictive method of intervention. The client has the right to refuse any service or support.
4. A coordinated effort...APS works with family, friends, neighbors and community resources to help those clients who live in unsafe conditions or can no longer care for themselves.
5. A continuum of care...Continuing to address the changing needs of the client is our goal.

If a request for APS is not considered appropriate, an intake worker is available for consultation or to provide information and referral services.

*Chances are you know or will come across an elderly or dependent adult who is being abused, neglected or exploited by family members or others. Don't let that person and his or her caregivers suffer in silence. If you are concerned or suspect that someone you know is at risk of physical, emotional or financial harm or abuse, call Contra Costa County Adult Protective Services.*

**Adult Protective Services 24-hour response line: (925) 646-2854 or Toll-Free (877) 839-4347**

Adult Protective Services Fax: (925) 335-8738

*All calls are handled confidentially*

*We assist  
adults and  
people with  
disabilities  
to maximize  
self-sufficiency,  
safety and  
independence.*



Contra Costa County

## Aging & Adult Services

A Bureau of the Employment & Human Services Department

**Adult Protective Services 24-hour response line: (925) 646-2854 or Toll-Free (877) 839-4347**

*All calls are handled confidentially*

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