

Elder Abuse is a Crying Shame



www.bcpl.info/stopelderabuse

A Newsletter of the Baltimore County Restoring Elder Safety Today

Summer 2010

Elder Abuse Coalition

Baltimore County Restoring Elder Safety **BC-REST** is a coalition working to educate and empower the community to identify, treat and prevent elder abuse in the county through education, advocacy and resource development.

The coalition has representatives from many county departments including: Aging, State's Attorney's Office, Social Services, Health, Public Library, Police and Fire, as well as local organizations, businesses and service providers.

To learn more about **BC-Rest** visit: www.bcpl.info/stopelderabuse.

Elder Abuse is an Under Recognized Problem With Devastating and Even Life Threatening Consequences.

Every day, headlines throughout the U.S. paint a grim picture of seniors who have been abused, neglected, and exploited, often by people they trust the most. A recent article in the *Baltimore Sun* highlights financial elder abuse. *Growing number of seniors are victims of finan-*

cial abuse: By Eileen Ambrose, July 4, 2010 http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2010-07-04/business/bs-bz-ambrose-seniors-20100704_1_elder-abuse-financial-abuse-les-kotzer

What is Elder Abuse?

According to Maryland law, elder abuse is any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver, spouse, family member, personal acquaintances, or professionals in positions of trust; or opportunistic strangers who prey on the vulnerable, or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. It includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, self-neglect or abandonment. It might be physical violence, isolation, or identity theft, or the theft or embezzlement of a senior's property.

June 15th , Annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Elder abuse is a global issue. To help raise awareness, **BC-REST** hosted its first annual Elder Abuse Awareness and Edu-

cation Rally on June 15, 2010 at Patriot Plaza in Towson, MD. The rally was kicked off with opening remarks from County Executive Jim Smith, followed by remarks from representatives of Baltimore County Department of Aging, EMT, Fire, Health, Police and Social Services.

To learn how you and/or your community can help to raise awareness about elder abuse, in Baltimore County, call the **BC-REST** at 410-887-4200. Outside Baltimore County call the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) at 302-831-3525.

Report Your Concerns

Any individual who has reason to believe that an alleged vulnerable adult has been subjected to abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation may file an oral or written report of the suspected abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation with the local police department or the local department of social services.

Remember most cases of elder abuse go undetected. Don't assume that someone has already reported a suspicious situation.

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Report Your Concerns

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If you or someone you know is in a life threatening situation or immediate danger: **contact 911 or the local police or sheriff.**

To report suspected abuse in the community or in an Assisted Living Facility call:

**Baltimore County Department of Social Services-Adult Protective Services
410-853-3000.**

To report suspected abuse in a nursing home call:

**Baltimore County Long Term Care Ombudsman
410-887-4200**

For information about elder abuse, call:
**Baltimore County Department of Aging
410-887-2594**

TDDY for hearing impaired call:
**Maryland Relay
711**

Warning Signs

- **Physical Abuse** - Slap marks, unexplained bruises, most pressure marks, and certain types of burns or blisters, such as cigarette burns.
- **Neglect** - Pressure ulcers, lack of medical care, malnutrition or dehydration.
- **Emotional Abuse** - Withdrawal from normal activities, unexplained changes in alertness, or other unusual behavioral changes.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Bruises around the breasts or genital area and unexplained sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Financial Abuse/Exploitation** - Sudden change in finances and accounts, altered wills and trusts, unusual bank withdrawals, checks written as "loans" or "gifts," and loss of property.

What Can I Do To Prevent Elder Abuse?

- **Report suspected mistreatment** to your local adult protective services agency or law enforcement. Although a situation may have already been investigated, if you believe circumstances are getting worse, continue to speak out.
- **Keep in contact** – Encourage seniors to talk to their older friends, neighbors, and relatives. Maintaining communication will help decrease isolation. It will also give them a chance to talk about any other problems.
- **Be aware of the possibility of abuse** – Look around and take note of what may be happening. Do they seem withdrawn, nervous, fearful, sad, or anxious, especially around certain people, when they have not seemed so in the past?
- **Contact your local Area Agency on Aging office** to identify local programs and sources of support. These programs can help elders to maintain well-being, and independence.
- **Volunteer** – to become involved in many programs that provide assistance and support for seniors.

Reasons Elder Abuse Goes Unreported

- Most elder abuse is perpetrated by caregivers who control the individual's access to the outside world, hence their ability to report.**
- Those in need of care fear retaliation or withdrawal of care.
 - Those in need of care don't know who to call for help.
 - Those who are being abused do not have visitors who would see the abuse.
 - Individuals are too embarrassed to report.
 - Cognitive impairment may make it difficult for the person to remember the abuse.



