

FINANCIAL ABUSE

Nancy is elderly and lives alone in home which she owns. Her son Max often visits and runs errands for her, such as getting the shopping and paying bills.

Nancy has given Max access to her bank accounts so that he can do this. One day Nancy went to the bank and discovered that almost all of her savings had been withdrawn by Max without her permission.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Annette recently allowed a family friend, Ben, to move into her house. Since moving in Ben has been verbally abusive. He calls Annette names and is very intimidating. Often Annette is scared to leave her bedroom when Ben is in the house.

NEGLECT

Catherine is an elderly lady who is quite frail and requires the assistance of a carer named Joe. Lately Catherine's daughter Elise is concerned that Joe isn't looking after Catherine properly. When she went to visit she noticed that Catherine looked pale and thin, was not washed or dressed properly and seemed generally uncared for.

Some Things to Consider If You Or Someone Else is Being Abused

All people have rights and these do not lessen as a person gets older. Everyone has the right to feel safe and experience life in all its fullness. Elder abuse is a hidden crime and is often carried out by someone who is known to the abused older person and who holds a position of trust in their life.

Nancy, Annette and Catherine are all suffering from elder abuse. Elder abuse can come in many forms, including physical, financial, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.

Generally, elder abuse is any deliberate act/s that cause harm as well as any neglect or mistreatment.

Nancy is being financially abused by her son Max. She should seek legal assistance to determine her rights and learn whether, and how, she can obtain her money back from Max and prevent him from abusing her in the future.

Annette is being emotionally abused by Ben. Emotional abuse may not be as obvious as physical abuse, but it is still a form of abuse. Annette should seek assistance from a legal service to determine how she can prevent this abuse from occurring.

Catherine is also being abused. Neglect and mistreatment are both forms of elder abuse. Neglect involves not giving someone the proper amount of care to ensure that their health and well-being is maintained. If Catherine is not being properly cared for by Joe then he is committing elder abuse. Catherine's daughter Elise should speak to Catherine and get her to contact a service for legal advice as well as other support services which may be able to assist her.

If you, or someone close to you is being abused in any of the above ways you should contact Seniors Rights Victoria. This is a newly funded service that has been set up to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older Victorians.

Questions to Ask

- **Am I, or is someone close to me, being abused by someone in a position of trust? Such abuse can include:**

- **Physical abuse** can include violence (such as hitting, biting or slapping), inappropriate restraint or anything that causes the intentional physical injury or harm to an older person.

- **Emotional or psychological abuse** is where you are treated with aggression or you are bullied. It includes name-calling or consistently giving someone “silent treatment” or “cold shoulder”, threatening a person or intimidating them. When someone does this to you or someone you know and it causes fear, anxiety, stress and emotional pain, this is abuse.

- **Financial abuse** has many forms and can be misuse of an older family member’s funds, through to stealing, forging documents, spending your money on expensive things without telling you and transferring property out of your name into theirs. It can also include not letting you use or spend your own money (for example, from your pension payment).

- **Sexual abuse** is any unwanted sexualized behaviour. This varies from forced inappropriate touching and nudity to rape.

- **Neglect** can be the failure to provide daily essentials, such as adequate food, water, medication and items such as clothing. It also includes the failure to provide emotional and lifestyle support (causing isolation).

- **If myself, or another person, is in immediate physical danger have the police been contacted?**

What to do if Things go Wrong

You can contact Seniors Rights Victoria on 1300 368 821 to obtain more information and assistance regarding issues of elder abuse. Seniors Rights Victoria can provide assistance and support you so that your health, safety and wellbeing are improved.

Seniors Rights Victoria provides regular services at Eastern Community Legal Centre in Box Hill each week. Seniors Information Victoria can also refer you to a service in your local community that may also be able to provide you with further assistance.

Useful Contacts

Eastern Community Legal Centre

Suite 3, Town Hall Hub
27 Bank Street
Box Hill VIC 3128
Ph: 9285 4822

Suite B, 6 Floriston Road
Boronia, VIC 3155
Ph: 9762 6235
1300 797 088
Web: www.eclc.org.au

Seniors Information Victoria

247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
Ph: 1300 13 50 90

Seniors Rights Victoria

4th Floor, Block Arcade
98 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Ph: 1300 368 821
Web: www.cotavic.org.au/seniors_rights_victoria

Victoria Legal Aid

23 Ringwood Street
Ringwood VIC 3134
Ph: (03) 9259 5444
Web: www.legalaid.vic.gov.au



eastern community legal centre

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