Elder Abuse Prevention: What College Students Should Know

What is elder mistreatment?
Elder mistreatment is an intentional act or failure to act that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult. Common types of elder mistreatment include physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, or financial abuse, neglect, or self-neglect. Multiple forms of mistreatment can co-occur.

Did you know?
- 1 in 10 community-dwelling older adults experiences abuse every year.
- 1 in 2 older adults with cognitive impairment experiences abuse.
- Only 1 in 24 cases of elder abuse is reported.
- Elder abuse has significant medical, mental health, financial, and social impacts.
- Elder Abuse occurs across all cultures, contexts, and communities.
- Older adults who are abused have a 3x higher risk of death compared to those who have not been mistreated.

What are signs of elder mistreatment?
Emotional & Behavioral Signs
- Increased fear or anxiety
- Isolation from friends or family
- Unusual changes in behavior or sleep
- Withdrawal from normal activities
Physical Signs

- Dehydration or unusual weight loss
- Missing daily living aids (glasses, walker, or medication)
- Unexplained injuries, bruises, cuts, or sores
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Unattended medical needs
- Unexplained sexually transmitted diseases

Financial Signs

- Fraudulent signatures on financial documents
- Unusual or sudden changes in spending patterns
- Unpaid bills

What are 6 things college students can do every day to prevent elder abuse?

1. Regularly engage with older adults.
2. Find and share common interests with older adults.
3. Foster social connections to support and empower community members across the lifespan.
4. Participate in or initiate intergenerational programs at school and in your community.
5. Educate others about the signs and impacts of abuse.
6. Report known or suspected abuse as soon as possible.

Where can I report suspected abuse?

Programs such as Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Long-Term Care Ombudsmen are here to help. For reporting numbers, contact Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 or visit www.eldercare.acl.gov.

In cases of urgent danger, call 911 or the local police or sheriff.

Don’t stand by, stand up to elder abuse. You can make a difference.