The Facts on Abuse of Older Adults

Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Elder abuse can take many forms. It is important to be aware of these warning signs:

- **Financial Exploitation**
  - Example: forcefully convincing an older adult to sign a check or will, controlling the older adult’s assets against their will
  - Warning Sign: valuable items, like jewelry, missing without explanation, discrepancy between standard of living and available assets

- **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**
  - Example: preventing an older adult from speaking with family, threatening to leave her/him, threatening to commit suicide, humiliating, ridiculing, taking walker, wheelchair, glasses and/or dentures
  - Warning Sign: withdrawn behavior, fearful around certain people

- **Physical Abuse**
  - Slapping, hitting, punching, burning, choking, and throwing things, being rough with intimate body parts during care giving
  - Warning Sign: unexplained injuries, visiting multiple doctors for same type of condition

- **Sexual Abuse**
  - Example: tricking an older adult into non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
  - Warning Sign: torn, stained, or bloody clothes, bruising on neck, thighs, genital injuries

- **Abandonment and Neglect**
  - Example: desertion by an individual with responsibility to care for an older adult
  - Warning Sign: poor hygiene, lost weight, malnourishment

**Who are the perpetrators?** Sadly, many victims have ongoing, trusting relationships with abusers, such as spouse/life partner, adult children, other family members, caregivers, and fiduciaries. The abuse often occurs in the person’s home (a private dwelling in the community or an institution, such as a nursing facility.)

**Reports of Elder Abuse.** The number of annual reported incidents of abuse of older adults in the United States range from 820,000 to 2.5 million. However, for every incident of abuse that is reported, there are many older adults that suffer in silence. The following are some of the factors that complicate the reporting of elder abuse for Latin@ older adults:

- Reliance on the family and the shame or fear of reporting family members
- Language barriers
- Immigration status
- Lack of information about their rights or available services

There is no need to prove an older adult is being abused to help them get the resources they need. Age, immigration status, limited English proficiency and sexual and gender identity are not barriers to helping older adults age with dignity and free from violence.

If you believe an older adult is being abused, help them learn about their rights and available resources and be supportive of her/him through the process. Remember that older adults are entitled to make their own decisions and we need to be respectful of that. There are some instances, however, when older adults may be incapacitated, such as individuals living with dementia. In these situations, it is important to report the abuse.

The **National Domestic Violence Hotline** has Spanish speaking advocates available around the clock at **1-800-799-SAFE** that can provide the older adult with a number of options and available resources.

For more information about elder abuse, visit the **National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)** at: **www.ncall.us**

If there are issues regarding immigration status, inquire about special immigration remedies for victims of crime through the U visa or the Self-Petition under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)