What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse affects seniors across all socio-economic groups, cultures, and races. Latin@ communities are no exception.

- It is estimated that 820,000 to 2.5 million incidents of elder abuse are reported each year. However, for every reported incident of abuse, there are many older adults that suffer in silence.
- Most offenders are spouses, partners, family members, caregivers and other persons in a relationship where the victim and society expect compassion and caring.
- There are specific factors that may get in the way of reporting the abuse of Latin@ older adults:
  - Reliance on the family and the shame or fear of reporting family members
  - Language barriers
  - Immigration status

Abuse is more than just physical harm. Recognize the warning signs:

- **Financial Exploitation**
  - Example: forcefully convincing an older adult to sign a check or will
  - Warning Signs: valuable items, like jewelry, go missing without an explanation, discrepancy between standard of living and available assets

- **Emotional/Psychological Abuse**
  - Example: Preventing an older adult from speaking with family
  - Warning Signs: withdrawn behavior, fearful around certain people

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

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

Show respect for our abuelitos by learning the warning signs of elder abuse, sharing that information with your family and friends, and supporting an older adult who is experiencing the abuse by helping them learn about their rights and available resources. 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. Educating and empowering our families builds on the strength of our Latin@ culture and is one of the best ways to end the abuse of older adults. People stand ready to provide help, regardless of age, English proficiency and immigration status.

If you believe an older adult is being abused, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has Spanish speaking advocates available around the clock at 1-800-799-SAFE.

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