



# Senior Series

*The Ohio  
Department of  
Aging*



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.state.oh.us/age/>  
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~seniors/>

SS-183-01

## Older Adult Abuse

Abuse of an older adult is terribly difficult to imagine. In many cultures, elders are respected and honored; an older adult is a revered, cherished resource to other family members, a source of support, comfort, and wonderful wisdom. How does one define older adult abuse? Abuse is defined as an infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, physical harm, pain, or mental anguish by another person. The older adult can be at risk of one or several of the following categories of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect/Deprivation
- Sexual Abuse

Financial abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect occur more frequently than

physical abuse or sexual abuse. Recommendations for the prevention of elder abuse include reversing our society's approval of violence in the community and at home as well as using all possible means to reduce stress within families. Meaningful relationships between families and their neighbors and communities will also serve to decrease older adult abuse. It is important to make sure that all family members, including seniors, share in decision making.

Whether as a result of aging or illness, a vulnerable older adult is one who is, or is likely to be, dependent on another for care. Every effort must be made to enable older adults to express their wishes and desires in a way that is appropriate for them. What is important is that **basic human rights be respected.**

Let's look at a Senior's Statement of Rights:

## I HAVE THE RIGHT TO

- Fair and honest treatment
- Be respected regardless of race, creed, religion, or ideology
- Information and education in an appropriate manner
- Participation in all aspects of society
- Have my age-related needs treated with sensitivity
- Be actively engaged in decision making that affects my life
- Share friendships
- Services that will help me maintain my independence
- Be listened to and heard
- Opportunities to serve the community by sharing my skills and knowledge
- A future

Schlesinger and Schlesinger (1988) summarize the concern by saying, “We must hear the silent cries and our voices must help them speak. We too will grow old, and we too want to live in a world of mutual respect, love and care and safety” (p. 10).

It is imperative that we listen, hear, and respect the wisdom shared by older adults. This wisdom will not only nurture immediate generations, but will continue to resonate throughout many generations to come!

### Source

Podnieks, E. (1985) “Elder abuse: It’s time we did something about it.” *The Canadian Nurse* 81, 11,36-39.

Schlesinger, B. & Schlesinger, R. (1988). *Abuse of the Elderly: Issues and Annotated Bibliography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

*What is important is that basic human rights be respected.*

Submitted by Lisa Marie Gibson, Ohio State University Extension, Franklin County.

Visit Ohio State University Extension’s WWW site “Ohioline” at:  
<http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu>

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Adm. and Director, OSU Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

4/01-klw