



# DenverDA

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## Consumer Advisory

### Take Action against Elder Abuse

June 15<sup>th</sup> commemorates World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. By definition, elder abuse is “any knowing or negligent act that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult” *National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)*. The abuse of those who are least able to defend themselves and are less likely to physically or financially recover is a public concern that can no longer be ignored. Elder abuse crosses all socio-economic lines, and it is estimated that two thirds of financial and other forms of abuse are inflicted by family members. The following are common signs of elder abuse and financial exploitation:

- Unexplained, bilateral bruises on arms and legs
- Older person appears frightened in the presence of a care giver or family member
- Elder is coerced into signing documents or withdrawing funds
- Family members and others move in and seemingly take over
- Care giver or family member has total control over finances
- Elder’s power of attorney is being misused by the agent
- Elder ‘quit claims’ their house to a ‘person of trust’ and is forced out of the home

#### **Often, where there is physical abuse, there is also financial exploitation!**

Older victims are extremely reluctant to report for many reasons. Shame and embarrassment, unwillingness to report their children, fear of not being believed, and economic dependence on their abuser keeps elders from reporting or seeking help. It is estimated that for every one case of elder abuse, five cases go unreported. Prevention is critical, and the following are steps older adults can take to protect themselves:

- Never sign papers without first understanding why, regardless of who asks.
- Treat home care workers like employees, and keep financial information locked up
- Set ground rules with family regarding their access to personal and financial accounts.

In Colorado, reporting elder abuse is urged, but not mandatory. Suspicions of abuse or exploitation should be reported to the Denver DA Fraud Hotline (720-913-9179), Denver Police Department (720-913-2000) or Denver Adult Protective Services (720-944-2994).

#### **Recognizing elder abuse is uncomfortable, but It’s OK to speak up!**

**Denver DA’s Fraud Line: 720-913-9179**

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