

## Elder Abuse, Self-Neglect:

### How to Spot + Report It

The Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) works to empower older adults and those with disabilities to age healthfully and happily and to feel safe in their homes and communities. We provide an array of programs and supports to people, including elder protective services.

The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as an act, or lack of action, occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. This includes physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse; financial, material abuse; abandonment; and neglect.

Our Elder Rights & Safety (ERS) unit investigates complaints of abuse and self-neglect of people 60 years of age and older. ERS works collaboratively with law enforcement agencies on suspected cases of financial exploitation.

Also, ERS offers a volunteer guardianship program for persons in need of a healthcare decision maker and who reside in long-term care facilities.

Unfortunately, cases of elder abuse and exploitation are on the rise – nationally and in Rhode Island. This phenomenon is fueled, in part, by the 'age wave.' Today, nearly 17 percent of Rhode Island residents are 65 or older, versus 10 percent nationally. By 2040, one in four Rhode Islanders will be part of this age cohort.

State law requires any person who suspects elder abuse, exploitation, or self-neglect to report it to OHA. Adults have the right to make choices, good or bad, about their lives. OHA does not have the authority to separate a person from other people or places.

Suspected abuse in a long-term care setting should be reported to Rhode Island's Long-Term Care Ombudsman at 401-785-3340.

Report suspected elder abuse  
and/or self-neglect anytime to:



**401-462-0555**

*Reports can be filed anonymously*

# the SIGNS

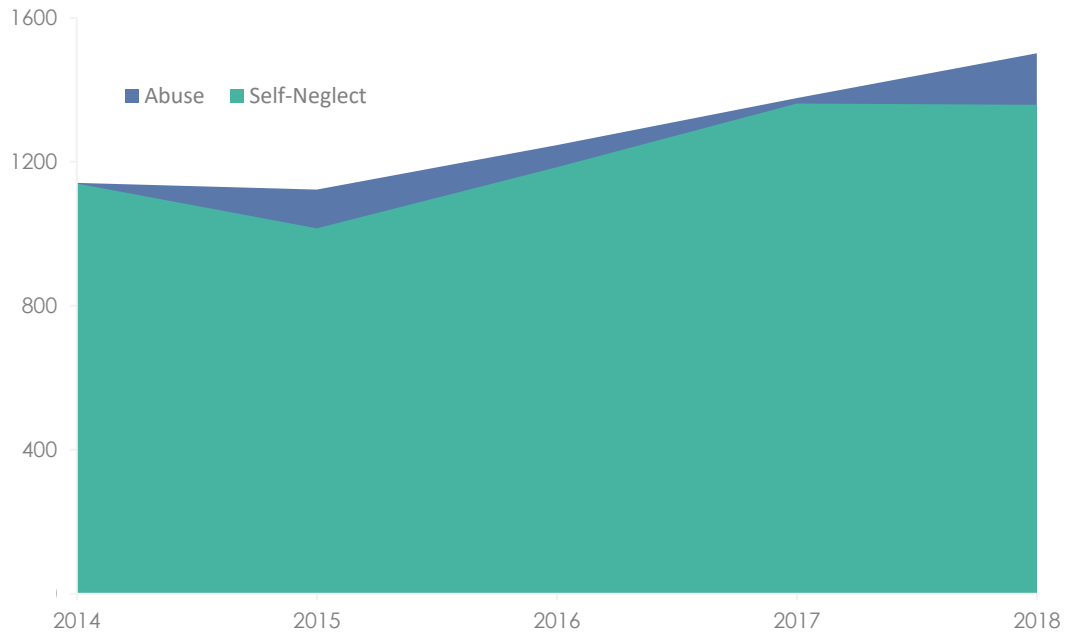
- Person lacks basic hygiene, adequate food or clean, appropriate clothing
- Person lives in a home that is cluttered, filthy, or in disrepair
- Person exhibits unexplained or uncharacteristic changes in behavior
- Person has unexplained fractures, bruises, welts, cuts, sores or burns
- Person has unexplained sexually transmitted disease(s)
- Person with dementia is left unsupervised
- Person is confined to bed without care and/or has untreated "bed" sores
- Person's money is controlled by caregiver, but caregiver is failing to provide for the individual's needs
- Person is isolated by a caregiver
- Caregiver is verbally aggressive or demeaning to the person

# Founded Elder Abuse & Self-Neglect Cases

Source: DEA, Statewide Data

Cases of abuse and exploitation are on the rise, as our population rapidly ages.

The number of substantiated elder abuse cases in Rhode Island increased by more than 30 percent between 2014 and 2018.

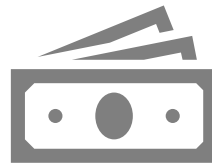


## BY THE NUMBERS

Elder abuse and/or neglect has a significant impact on our communities, families and economy



Each year, **one in 10** Americans age 60 years or older experience abuse



Estimates of elder financial abuse and fraud cases range from \$2.9 billion to **\$36.5 billion** annually



Seniors who experience abuse or neglect are **twice** as likely to be hospitalized as their peers



Elder abuse is underreported: an estimated **one in 23** cases are known to authorities

Source: National Center on Elder Justice

Report suspected elder abuse and/or self-neglect to:

**401-462-0555**

RHODE ISLAND OFFICE OF  
**HealthyAging**