



## Supporting Caregivers to Prevent Elder Abuse

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Caregiver stress is the most common cause of elder abuse. The demands of caring for an older, frail, or disabled individual can interfere with all aspects of a caregiver's life, leaving both parties isolated and creating a potentially dangerous situation for the care receiver.

Caring for frail older people can be a very difficult and stress-provoking task. This is particularly true when the

1. care receiver is mentally or physically impaired
2. caregiver is ill prepared for the task,
3. needed resources are lacking.

### **Possible Indicators of Abuse from the Caregiver**

- Care receiver may not be given the opportunity to see others without the presence of the caregiver (suspected abuser).
- Care receiver may not be given the opportunity to speak for him or herself without the presence of the caregiver (suspected abuser).
- Caregiver blames the care receiver for actions such as incontinence as a deliberate act.
- Caregiver demonstrates aggressive behavior (threats, insults, harassment) toward the care receiver.
- Caregiver demonstrates attitudes of indifference or anger toward the care receiver.
- Caregiver does not offer or provide assistance when needed.
- Conflicting accounts of incidents by family, supporters, or care receiver.
- Flirtations, coyness, etc as possible indicators of inappropriate sexual relationship.
- Inappropriate display of affection by the caregiver.
- Inappropriate or unwarranted defensiveness by caregiver.
- Previous history of abuse of others.
- Problems with alcohol or drugs.
- Social isolation of family, or isolation or restriction of activity of the older adult within the family unit by the caregiver.
- Unwillingness or reluctance by the caregiver to comply with service providers when planning for care and implementation of care.