

As with other cases of domestic or institutional violence, older adults and adults with disabilities must:

- Know their rights
- Put a stop to abuse
- Be protected from the abuse situation
- Have access to basic resources
- Have emotional support
- Connect with support groups

Who abuses the elderly and adults with disabilities?

Usually, the abuser can be a person close to the victim, a family member, (such as a spouse, a son-in-law or daughter-in-law, children, grandchildren, friends) or any other person that the victim depends on. Abuse can also take place in nursing homes, activity centers, or other care facilities.

It's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and mistreatment in the elderly and adults with disabilities so that they can be referred to the Department of Family Affairs.

If you know or suspect there is an abuse situation affecting an elderly person or an adult with disabilities, report it immediately to the nearest Local Department of Family Affairs Office.

To report cases of domestic or institutional abuse or negligence, you may call:

Department of the Family Regional Offices

- Aguadilla**
787-891-5570
- Arecibo**
787-816-3330
- Bayamón**
787-269-2222
- Caguas**
787-747-0202
- Carolina**
787-762-3070
- Guayama**
787-864-4373
- Humacao**
787-852-6464
- Mayagüez**
787-832-8050
- Ponce**
787-848-4520
- San Juan**
787-724-8585

Counseling Hotline

787-977-8022 · 1-888-359-7777

306 Lila Mayoral Building
Hato Rey, Puerto Rico
PO box 194090
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00619-4090
Phone (787) 625-4900

Prevention of Abuse against **The Elderly** and **Adults with** **Disabilities**



GOBIERNO DE PUERTO RICO
Departamento de la Familia
Administración de Familias y Niños

Prevention of Abuse against The Elderly and Adults with Disabilities

Abuse or negligence can occur because of an act or omission that results in harm and which jeopardizes the person's safety or wellbeing.

There are two important factors that we must keep in mind when dealing with cases of abuse and negligence affecting the elderly and adults with disabilities. First, their vulnerable situation arising from their age or condition, because they could be in a more fragile mental or physical state. Second, the people around them have learned to exercise their power over them through abuse.

The abuser is generally someone who can exert influence or control over the victim. In other words, the victim generally trusts the person who is abusing them.



Types of abuse include, among others:

Negligence – failing to provide food and medications when they are needed and in sufficient amounts to meet their needs based on their physical condition, or failing to provide proper medical care, hygiene, or recreation.

Physical Abuse – hitting, shoving, restraining, or causing physical harm to the victim

Exploitation – forcing the victim to carry out acts that are not appropriate given their physical condition. Includes forcing the victim to work without pay or to beg for money.

Emotional Abuse –threatening, insulting, humiliating, or treating the victim without the respect they deserve.

Sexual Abuse – forcing the person to engage in sexual acts against their will.

Financial Exploitation – using the victim's money, property, or belongings without their knowledge or consent.

Institutional Abuse – any act of abuse or negligence carried out by an operator or employee of a facility that provides 24-hour or part-time care services, or when the abuse or negligence is a result of the facility's policy, practices, or conditions.

When an elderly person or an adult with a disability shows signs of:

- Depression, anxiety, or fear
- Physical injuries with no reasonable explanation
- Lacking sufficient sustenance or proper clothing
- Financial abuse
- Other forms of abuse

It is important that we report the situation so that an investigation can be carried out to determine whether the person is a victim of abuse or neglect.

The abuse of elderly people or adults with disabilities is generally not reported because the victims fear their abusers or because of the strong feelings of love or loyalty they may feel towards their abuser.

