



15 Minutes

05 Background

1. Dependent Adult Abuse

A. DHS Figures.

For most current DAA statistics check out the DHS website:

www.dhs.state.ia.us/Partners/Reports/PeriodicReports/Abuse/Adult.html

B. DIA Figures.

For most current DAA statistics call: 515-281-7376

NOTE: Dependent adult abuse also includes persons with disabilities.

2. Understanding Why Victims of Abuse Do Not Report



Visuals

**Understanding
Why Victims
of Abuse Do
Not Report**

- Persons who have never been self-confident are not likely to ask for help when they become dependent.
- Persons who have been abused or neglected their entire lives expect to be neglected and abused and would never consider that someone would want to help them and often reject help if offered.
- Abused dependent adults may have had either law enforcement or government agencies try to help in the past and the abuse, neglect or exploitation became worse when law enforcement or agency representatives were not around.
- Some cultures believe whatever happens within a family is no one's business.
- The dependent adult may be ashamed or embarrassed to be neglected, abused or financially exploited by a trusted family member.
- Dependent adults often promise the abuser they will not tell anyone so the abuser will not inflict more abuse either on them or other loved ones including pets.
- Some abusers threaten to withhold care or necessities if the abused dependent adult tells anyone about the abuse.
- The dependent adult may fear being placed in a nursing home.



Visuals

Why Mandatory Reporters Do Not Report

3. Why Mandatory Reporters Do Not Report

- Hurt the relationship with the victim and or the person suspected of having abused the person
- Retaliation from the victim or perpetrator
- Fear of losing job
- Court time – loss of work time
- Nothing changes and everyone involved gets upset
- Don't want to get involved – it is not any of my business



Visuals

Why Abuse Occurs

4. Why Abuse Occurs

Why people abuse is a complex issue – one to which there are usually no concrete answers. The literature offers some theories that help increase our understanding of the causes leading to abuse. Those dominant theories include:

- Retaliation.* Abuse suffered as a child, and unresolved issues surrounding that abuse may cause retaliation. This is particularly true if the elderly parent continues to bait the adult child.
- Violence as a Way of Life.* We live in a violent society. Levels of violence vary within families and often create a generational pattern.
- Unresolved Conflict.* Conflicts may stem from childhood to midlife, or from marital relationships. Patterns within relationships often continue without resolution.
- Lack of Close Family Ties.* In families where there is little or no closeness in the relationship between adult children and their parents, the sudden appearance of a dependent elderly parent can bring stress and frustration, and result in abuse.
- Lack of Financial Resources.* Families face issues such as juggling work and care giving responsibilities. The addition of another person in the household along with increasing costs for medical care and other

services can contribute to financial strain. Public assistance programs (SSI & Medicaid) may also decrease the stipend if living with family members.

- F. *Resentment of Dependency.* Caring for a frail older person who requires considerable assistance can be draining and overwhelming. Stress and frustration can occur even when there is a close family tie.
- G. *Increased Life Expectancy.* The dependency period of old age has potentially expanded, leaving caretakers to provide extensive home care for a longer period of time. With a decrease in the birth rate, there are fewer adult children to care for their elderly parents and grandparents in the future.
- H. *History of Mental or Emotional Problems.* The caretaker may not be able to cope properly with the demands of caregiving. A person who is mentally or emotionally unstable may be inappropriate as a caretaker. This may be a factor for the caretaker as well as the dependent adult
- I. *Unemployment.* Financial and emotional stress raises the level of frustration and weakens self-control.
- J. *History of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.* Substance abuse is frequently a factor in family violence. Alcohol suppresses inhibitions, thus making aggressive behavior more likely. This may be a factor for the caretaker as well as the dependent adult.
- K. *Long Distance Caregiver.* Distance also plays a factor with children not always living close to their parents.



Visuals

Common Characteristics of Victims

5. Common Characteristics of Victims

The following examples offer a profile of who is most likely to be a victim of abuse.

- *Female.* There are more older women than older men. Older women are less likely to resist abusive behavior and are more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

- *Advanced Age.* The older the individual, the higher the risk of abuse due to increased physical and mental impairments and an inability to resist adversities.
- *Dependent.* The fact that an individual is dependent on another for their care makes them more vulnerable to abuse.
- *Problem Drinker.* Alcoholism makes it difficult to provide care for oneself.
- *Intergenerational Conflict.* Problems between parents and children don't always decrease over time. They may, in fact, be intensified by the increasing dependency of the parent.
- *Internalizing the Blame.* Blaming one self and failing to acknowledge that the abuser is at fault increases vulnerability.
- *Isolation.* Minimal contact with others increases difficulty in detection and intervention.

The presence of one or more of these factors does not necessarily indicate the presence of abuse. Rather, the theories help us to understand why abuse can and does occur.