

Spotting the warning signs of vulnerable adult abuse

Megan Schmidt
Training Manager
Adult Protective Services

**Learning
objectives**

Describe the
role of Adult
Protective
Services

Define abuse,
neglect, and
exploitation
and possible
warning signs.

Resources
and ways to
protect

Describe the
steps to take if
abuse or
neglect is
suspected.

**Adult Protective Services is
the State agency with the
responsibility and authority
to investigate abuse,
neglect, and exploitation
involving vulnerable adults.**

Vulnerable adult

Two categories:

- An elder adult – defined as anyone age 65 or older.
- A dependent adult 18 years of age or older who has a mental and/or physical impairment that **substantially** affects that person's abilities.
(Defined on next slide)

Vulnerable adult

A dependent adult (18+) who has a mental or physical impairment which **substantially** affects that person's ability to:

1. Provide personal protection
2. Provide necessities such as food, shelter, clothing or, mental or other health care
3. Obtain services necessary for health, safety, or welfare
4. Carry out the activities of daily living
5. Manage the adult's own financial resources
6. Comprehend the nature and consequences of remaining in a situation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation

In Utah, the definition of a vulnerable adult must meet these criteria:

- 65 year of age or older
- 18-64 and has a physical or mental impairment that substantially impacts their ability to care for themselves, and puts them at risk
- Residing in Utah

Who can receive APS Services?

Adult Protective Services can not:

- Unless there are exigent circumstances and need to protect the vulnerable adult from imminent harm, an investigator may not enter the home of a vulnerable adult unless the vulnerable adult, legal guardian or caretaker consents.
- Remove the adult against their will from their living quarters to another living environment.*
- Take custody of an adult.
- Place an adult in a nursing home or other facility.
- Provide any services without the voluntary consent of the alleged victim or their guardian unless the court orders to do so.
- Conduct welfare checks.

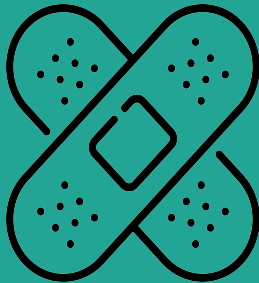
What Adult Protective Services can **not** do

Individuals do not meet the requirement of APS services when:

- There is not a current allegation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- The referral involves an alleged financial scam or alleged consumer fraud
- The referral contains insufficient information to locate the victim

Who can **not** receive APS Services?

Abuse

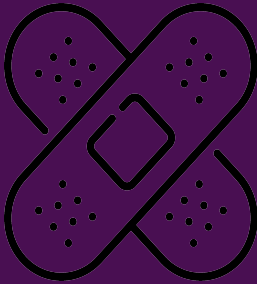


Physical abuse may include slapping, hitting, beating, bruising or causing someone physical pain, injury or suffering

Emotional abuse involves knowing or intentional verbal or nonverbal conduct directed at a vulnerable adult

Results in mental anguish, emotional distress, fear, humiliation, degradation, agitation, or confusion

Warning signs of physical abuse



- An injury that is inconsistent with an explanation for its cause
- Cuts, puncture wounds, burns, bruises, welts, pressure marks
- Dismissive attitude or statement about injuries
- Forced isolation
- Inappropriate administration of medication, physical restraint

Warning signs of emotional abuse



- Fear, anxiety, agitation, withdrawal, depression, hesitant to talk openly
- Lack of interest in social contact, increased isolation from trusted individuals
- Unexplained or uncharacteristic changes in behavior

- Family crisis or family members are suffering from stress
- Domestic issues causing violence or conflict in the home
- Depression, unusual fears or sudden loss of self-confidence
- Noticeable withdrawal and lack of socialization
- Loneliness and isolation

What are some risk factors of abuse?

Neglect



- Neglect includes failures by individuals to support the physical, emotional and social needs of adults dependent on others for their care and well-being. Neglect can take the form of not providing adequate food, medications, or access to health care professionals.
- Physical neglect is failing to attend to a person's medical, hygienic, nutrition and dietary needs, such as; dispensing medications, failing to follow through with prescribed care, bathing, grooming, dressing, or failing to provide ample food to maintain health.

Warning signs of neglect



- Lack of basic hygiene, adequate food and water, or clean and appropriate clothing
- Dehydration or malnutrition without illness-related cause
- Lack of medical aids (glasses, walker, teeth - dentures or partials, hearing aid, medications)
- Inappropriate administration of medication
- Soiled clothing or bedding

Financial exploitation



- Illegal or improper use of a vulnerable adult's funds, property or assets
 - For the benefit of someone other than the vulnerable adult
- The most common form of older adult abuse, but only a small fraction of incidents are reported
- Vulnerable adults can be especially vulnerable due to: a cognitive decline, physical disability, health problems, recent loss of partner/family member/friend leading to loneliness and/or isolation.

Warning signs of financial exploitation



- Missing personal possessions
- Unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts
- Increased Isolation
- The family or others show an unusual interest in the assets of the person.
- Paid caregiver requesting money or goods for assistance (money for rides, vulnerable adult buying lunch for staff)

Why are vulnerable adults financially exploited

Older adults are targeted because:

- Established assets: home, pension, Social Security, 401k, etc.
- Abusers follow the money: adults 50+ own 77% of all assets in the United States
- Poverty increases the risk of financial exploitation: a regular check or place to live can make them a target
- More reliant on others for help with shopping, bill pay, etc.



PROTECT YOURSELF

- Beware of joint accounts/joint tenancy
- Never sign documents you have not read or do not understand
- Never share your credit card, debit card, PIN, or blank checks
- Monitor your bank and credit card statements
- Stay involved in your community
- Regularly communicate with friends and family
- Set boundaries with children and grandchildren. It is your money, you can say no!

If It Happens to You

- It is normal to be hesitant about reporting abuse by a family member.
- Abuse, neglect and exploitation leads to increased anxiety, depression, severe stress, and sleep problems.
- You are not alone.
- Report, and get help!



Financial Resources & Reporting

Utah Dept. of Consumer Protection (Fraud)
801-530-6601

Utah Dept. of Securities (Investments)
801-530-6600

Federal Trade Commission
reportfraud.ftc.gov
reportefraude.ftc.gov (Spanish)

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:

- Money Smart for Older Americans Guide
- <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/fraud/>

If you, or someone you know,
has been a victim of a scam or
consumer fraud...



Additional Financial Resources & Reporting

AARP Fraud Watch Network
(877) 908-3360; aarp.org

National Council on Aging
ncoa.org

Utah Legal Services
801-328-8891

Disability Law Center
(800) 662-9080

Do Not Call Registry
donotcall.org

Social Security Administration (if benefits
misused/stolen)
(800) 269-0271

Veterans Affairs (if VA benefits
misused/stolen)
(888) 407-0144



Utah Department of
Health & Human Services
Aging & Adult Services

Community Resources

Area Agencies on Aging (statewide):

<https://daas.utah.gov/locations>

- Meals on Wheels
- In-home Services
- Senior Transportation
- Caregiver Support
- Legal Services
- Refugee Assistance (SLCo)
- Utah Senior Health Insurance (SHIP)
- Senior Medicare Patrol
- Utah Senior Health Insurance

Alzheimer's Association:

(800) 272-3900 24 hours

(801) 265-1944 Utah Chapter

Family Justice Center (Salt Lake & Utah County):

(801) 537-8600 (SL) / **(801) 851-8554** (UC)

Utah 211: <https://www.211utah.org>

Utah Aging: <https://www.utahaging.org>

Mandatory reporting in Utah

Utah has a **mandatory reporting law**. UC
§26B-6-205

Any person who has reason to believe that any vulnerable adult has been the subject of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall immediately notify Adult Protective Services intake or the nearest law enforcement agency.

When the initial report is made to law enforcement, law enforcement shall immediately notify Adult Protective Services intake. Adult Protective Services and law enforcement shall coordinate, as appropriate, their efforts to provide protection to the vulnerable adult.

How to report to Adult Protective Services

To report abuse, neglect, or
exploitation of vulnerable adults
please call:

1-800-371-7897

Monday-Friday
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Report online 24/7
daas.utah.gov

Any Questions?

Megan Schmidt
Cell: 385-270-4069
Email: mjschmidt@utah.gov

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