

Identifying elder financial exploitation

Elders are a valued and respected community resource. If you are aware of the signs of elder financial exploitation you can help protect vulnerable elders in your community.

Identifying elder financial exploitation may be difficult. Elders may be reluctant to say anything about what is happening to them out of embarrassment and shame, fear of reprisal, dependency on the perpetrator of the offense, or fear of further straining a family relationship. Family members or close friends may be unaware of the situation with the elder. Or they may be the individuals financially exploiting the elders.

Use this checklist to educate community members about elder financial exploitation. It can be used one-on-one if someone expresses concern about an elder and his or her living conditions, care, or financial situation. Responses to the questions included in the checklist can help you or the individual you are working with get assistance.

What to do

- **Review the warning signs** of elder financial exploitation.
- **Record the status of the warning sign.** Is the sign of potential financial exploitation suspected? Has it been observed, or has it been reported to authorities?

A step further

If someone believes that elder financial exploitation is occurring, share the “Getting help for elder financial exploitation” tool with them.

Explain that they don’t have to prove that abuse is taking place to report it. It’s up to the authorities to investigate the report and, if necessary, take action.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Recognize warning signs by Identifying elder financial exploitation

1. Use this checklist to identify warning signs that someone is financially exploiting an elder.
2. Check the box to note if the situation is suspected, if you've observed it taking place, or if it has been reported to tribal authorities.

Check the box if suspected, observed, or reported.

Situation	Suspected	Observed	Reported
The elder's living conditions are below expectations in light of her financial resources.			
Family members are living with the elder, but not assuming financial or maintenance/upkeep responsibilities of the home and/or property.			
A live-in caregiver refuses to leave or to leave the elder alone with visitors.			
Caregivers or family members caring for the elder seem to isolate him from other family members, friends, and community events or gatherings.			
A caregiver refuses to spend the elder's money on necessities for basic care, including expenditures for personal grooming, household upkeep, and appropriate medical care.			
A caregiver receives an unusual level of expensive or frequent gifts paid for with financial resources of the elder.			
The elder transfers title of home or other assets to someone else for no apparent reason.			

Situation	Suspected	Observed	Reported
The elder's personal belongings, important papers, credit cards, or identification documents go missing.			
Changes are made to the elder's will that are unexplainable or made when the elder is ill or otherwise incapacitated.			
Frequent checks are made out to "cash" from the elder's account.			
The caregiver's name is added to the accounts of the elder or the caregiver becomes an authorized user on credit card accounts belonging to the elder.			
Unusual bank or credit card activity is reported.			
Bills go unpaid or overdue when someone else has been charged with paying them for the elder.			
The elder does not know how much income she receives. The caregiver is unwilling to share that information when asked by other family members.			
The elder seems suddenly more fearful and becomes reluctant to talk about topics that were once routine conversations.			
Signatures on checks, legal documents, or other communications do not match the elder's signature.			
The elder takes out a large, unexplained loan or reverse mortgage.			
Unusual information in a tax return is spotted.			

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