

Whether you are a senior yourself or care for a senior in your life, it is important to be aware of crimes that victimize the elderly, the rights of a senior and crime prevention tips that can help to prevent some victimizations.

Under Colorado Law, seniors are those persons who are 60 years of age or older. When a member of this important population is a victim of crime, it often falls into one of the categories listed below.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Mistreatment can be an act of commission (abuse) or omission (neglect). It can also be intentional or unintentional. Mistreatment will fall into one or more categories. These include physical, psychological or emotional mistreatment. Other forms include financial abuse and neglect that result in unnecessary suffering, pain loss, or the violation of human rights and decreased quality of life. In a health study done by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it was found that when seniors are victims of mistreatment or abusive behavior, the number of crimes breaks down in this way:

NEGLECT--48.7%

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE--35.5%

PHYSICAL ABUSE--25.6%

FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION--30.2%

ABANDONMENT--3.6%

Abuse occurs because of the dependency of the abuser on the victim; the mental state of the abuser; and a lack of external support for the victim. Stress is also a contributing factor.

According to the National Association of Adult Protective Services Association (NAAPSA), every action that is taken for a senior must balance the duty to protect the safety of the vulnerable adult with their right to self-determination.

Older people who are victims of abuse, exploitation or neglect, should be treated with honesty caring and respect.

Again according to NAAPSA:

Adults have the right to be safe; seniors retain all of their civil and constitutional rights unless restricted by court action; they have the right to make decisions that do not conform with societal norms as long as these decisions do not harm others.

VICTIMIZATION

Depending on the statistical agency doing the reporting, only one in four cases of abuse, self-neglect or neglect cases are reported. Furthermore only one in seven crimes against seniors are reported.

Adult children are the largest category of perpetrators at 47%. Spouses are the second category at 19.3%. Other relatives are in third place at 8.8%.

Grandchildren are the fourth category at 8.6%. When seniors refuse to prosecute it is usually due to fear of retaliation, family disapproval, feelings of inadequacy and problems with self-esteem. Only 30% to 40% of senior crime victims will prosecute and about 15% to 20% go forward with a trial.

Seniors feel that sometimes they are treated with the respect they are due by the Criminal Justice System. They face the daunting complexity and length of criminal proceedings.

The effects of crime on seniors can include depression, panic, fear, sleeplessness, fear of leaving their home and fear for their future. They can also feel alienation, guilt, shame denial and suffer from posttraumatic stress syndrome.

MORTALITY RATES OF NONABUSED AND ABUSED ELDERS WERE TRACKED: AFTER 13 YEARS 40% OF NONABUSED ELDERS WERE LIVING WHILE ONLY 9% OF ABUSED WERE STILL ALIVE.

AS ADVOCATES:

KNOW THE DIFFERENCES THAT SURROUND SENIORS AS VICTIMS
BE OBSERVANT OF SENIORS WHEN YOU ARE IN A CRIME/ADVOCATE
SITUATION WHERE **THEY ARE NOT THE VICTIM**
SHOW INTEREST: ASK QUESTIONS

WALT DISNEY SAID:

PEOPLE DON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW
MUCH YOU CARE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION

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