

Frequently Asked Questions

What will I be asked?

When you report, you will be asked:

- To tell what you know about the situation;
- For contact information of the vulnerable adult, the person you think is causing the harm, and yourself;
- For the names and telephone numbers of other people who can provide information about the situation;
- If you know of any safety concerns.

What happens after I report?

- The vulnerable adult is interviewed in private.
- Protective services may be offered in the least restrictive environment available and appropriate to the needs of the vulnerable adult.
- The vulnerable adult must consent to services and be informed of the right to refuse or withdraw from services. DSHS cannot remove adults from where they live or place them in a different residence against their wishes.
- DSHS will report suspected crimes to law enforcement.

What else is important to know?

- If you report in good faith, you have immunity from liability.
- Your name and information about the vulnerable adult is confidential (public disclosure or other state and federal regulations may apply).

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov for more information about adult abuse and prevention and additional resources and programs to support vulnerable adults.

Ordering Publications: You may order this brochure and other DSHS publications through the Department of Printing's (DOP) General Store. Go to the DOP website at: www.prt.wa.gov.

Partners in Protection



A Guide for Reporting Vulnerable Adult Abuse



ADSA Aging & Disability
Services Administration



Abuse of vulnerable adults happens more often than any of us would like to admit.

Abuse happens to men and women from all ethnic backgrounds, social positions and crosses all economic boundaries. In many cases, the abuser is a family member, spouse, friend, or caregiver. Abuse takes place in a private home as well as facilities.

For every case of abuse reported, statistics point to as many as **four cases that go unreported**. This means the majority of vulnerable adults being harmed continue to suffer - often without any way of getting help.

All of us, as responsible citizens, must work to prevent or stop vulnerable adults from being harmed.

You can:

- 1. Know if you are considered a mandatory reporter.**
- 2. Know who is considered a vulnerable adult.**
- 3. Stay alert to possible signs and symptoms of the different forms of abuse.**
- 4. Report suspected abuse immediately.**

1 Know if you are a mandatory reporter

By law, you are a mandatory reporter if you are a(n):

- DSHS employee.
- Individual provider contracted to provide services to a DSHS client.
- County coroner or medical examiner.
- Employee of a facility licensed by DSHS, including boarding homes, adult family homes, nursing homes, residential habilitation centers and soldiers' homes.
- Social worker.
- Health care provider as defined in RCW 18.130, such as a doctor or nurse.
- Christian Science practitioner.
- Employee of a social service, welfare, mental health, adult day health, adult day care, home health, home care, or hospice agency.
- Law enforcement officer.
- Professional school personnel.

2 Know who is considered a vulnerable adult

Any adult 60 years or older who cannot take care of him or herself is considered a vulnerable adult. Other adults considered vulnerable are 18 years or older and:

- Have a legal guardian.
- Have a developmental disability.
- Live in a facility licensed by DSHS/ADSA.
- Receive services from a DSHS contracted individual provider.
- Receive in-home services through a licensed health, hospice, or home care agency.
- Have a personal care aide who performs care under his/her direction for compensation.



3 Stay alert to possible signs and symptoms of the different forms of abuse

Abuse is intentionally causing pain, suffering, and/or injury to a vulnerable adult. Abuse can be physical, mental or sexual. Signs include:

- Unexplained injuries or behavior.
- Vulnerable adult appears afraid of a person or certain situations.
- Vulnerable adult is kept isolated from others.
- Vulnerable adult reports abuse.

Abandonment is when a person who has responsibility for providing care to a vulnerable adult deserts or leaves him/her without basic life necessities. Signs include:

- The vulnerable adult is deserted in their home.
- The vulnerable adult reports being abandoned.

Neglect is refusing or failing to provide a vulnerable adult with basic life necessities or not taking action to prevent harm or pain. **Self-neglect** is the person's own failure to maintain health and safety. Signs include:

- Sudden decline in physical appearance.
- Untreated injuries or health problems.
- Unsafe living conditions.

Exploitation is intentionally taking advantage of a vulnerable adult either personally or financially. Signs include:

- Disappearance of possessions or property.
- Sudden transfer of money, unauthorized use of bankcards, and/or forged signature on checks.
- Undue influence or coercion.

4 Report suspected abuse immediately

When must you report?

Report immediately to DSHS if you have **reasonable cause** to believe that a vulnerable adult is being harmed. You do not need proof of that harm.

Who do you call to report?

The number to call depends on where the person you suspect is being harmed lives, who may be doing the harm, and whether you are a mandatory reporter.

Adult Protective Services (APS) Reporting Numbers

To report suspected abuse of a person **living in their own home or apartment**, call the Adult Protective Services (APS) regional reporting number in the county where/he she lives.

Region 1

Spokane, Grant, Okanogan, Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Lincoln, Ferry, Stevens, Whitman, Pend Oreille, Yakima, Kittitas, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, Asotin, and Klickitat Counties

1-800-459-0421 (TTY) 509-568-3086

Region 2

King, Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties

1-866-221-4909 (TTY) 1-800-977-5456

Region 3

Pierce, Kitsap, Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Clark Counties

1-877-734-6277 (TTY) 1-800-672-7091



Complaint Resolution Unit (CRU) Reporting Number

To report suspected abuse of a **person living in an adult family home, boarding home, or nursing home**, call the CRU reporting number.

1-800-562-6078 (TTY) 1-800-737-7931

If you think someone may be in danger or needs urgent help, call 911 immediately!



Mandatory Reporter Responsibilities

- Mandatory reporters are **required by law to report** suspected abuse.
- Report immediately if you have **reasonable cause** to believe that a vulnerable adult is being harmed. You do not need proof of that harm.
- Report suspected physical or sexual assault to **both** law enforcement and DSHS.*
- Report immediately to the coroner or medical examiner, law enforcement, and DSHS if you suspect a death was caused by abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

* For further information about reporting actions between vulnerable adults, see RCW 74.34.035.

General Public Vulnerable Adult Abuse Reporting Number

You do **not** have to be a mandatory reporter to report suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult or child. If you are a concerned citizen and suspect a vulnerable adult is being harmed, call:



Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

1-866-737-7931/Voice/TTY

It is the policy of the Department of Social and Health Services that no person, because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, creed, or disability, shall be discriminated against in any aspect of program activities.