

How To Spot Elder Abuse From Afar: Signs & Solutions For Long-Distance Caregivers

From a distance, it can be hard to assess the quality of your family member's caregivers. Ideally, if there is a primary caregiver on the scene, he or she can keep tabs on how things are going.

Perhaps you have already identified friends or neighbors who can stop in unannounced to be your eyes and ears. Sometimes, a [geriatric care manager](#) can help.

You can stay in touch with your family member by phone and take note of any comments or mood changes that might indicate neglect or mistreatment. These can happen in any setting, at any socioeconomic level. Abuse can take many forms, including domestic violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse, theft, and neglect.



Sometimes the abuser is a hired caregiver, but he or she can also be someone familiar. Stress can take a toll when adult children are caring for aging parents, or when an older person is caring for an aging spouse or sibling. In some families, abuse continues a long-standing family pattern. In others, the older adult's need for constant care can cause a caregiver to lash out verbally or physically. In some cases, especially in the middle to late stages of [Alzheimer's disease](#), the older adult may become difficult to manage and physically aggressive, causing harm to the caregiver. This might cause a caregiver to respond angrily.

But no matter who is the abuser or what is the cause, [abuse and neglect](#) are never acceptable responses. If you feel that your family member is in physical danger, contact the authorities right away. If you suspect abuse, but do not feel there is an immediate risk, talk to someone who can act on your behalf: your parent's doctor, for instance, or your contact at a home health agency. Suspected abuse must be reported to adult protective services.

We Can Help!
Alzheimer's Orange County
Call 844.373.4400
For more caregiver tips
Visit us at:
www.alzoc.org/resources

Information taken from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health> | NIH May 2017 | Reviewed by AlzOC June 2022