



Saying Nothing Can Cause the Most Hurt

Elder Abuse Wisconsin Report 2004

Where to Get Help

To identify your local elder abuse agency, call either your local county/tribal aging unit or the Wisconsin Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources at (608) 266-2536. You may also email: StopAbuse@dhfs.state.wi.us.

State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Disability and Elder Services
Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources
P.O. Box 7851
Madison, WI 53707-7851
Phone: (608) 266-2536
Web site: www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging

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INCREASE IN ELDER ABUSE

This report documents the growing problem of elder abuse in Wisconsin. Counties report to the Department of Health and Family Services a disturbing aspect of the aging of the population - more abuse. A total of 3,937 cases of suspected abuse and neglect were reported in 2004, an increase of 2.2 percent from 2003. Tragically, 17 were fatal and another 320 were considered life-threatening. More than one in 12 (8.6 %) are involved in either a fatal or life-threatening situation. Information about the types of abuse reported, characteristics of the victims and abusers, and local responses guide the State's efforts to prevent elder abuse and protect seniors.

DEFINING ELDER ABUSE

Four categories of elder abuse are defined in Wisconsin Statutes (Ch. 46.90). When a person aged 60 or older is subjected to any of these types of abuse or neglect, it is elder abuse.

• Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the willful infliction of physical pain, injury or unreasonable confinement. It includes, but is not limited to beating, choking, burning, inappropriate medication and tying or locking a person up. It also includes **sexual abuse**. Sexual abuse occurs when a person has been forced, tricked, threatened or otherwise coerced into sexual contact against one's will.

• Material Abuse (Financial Exploitation)

Material abuse is the misuse of an elder's money or property. It includes deception, diverting income, mismanagement of funds and taking money or possessions against a person's will.

• Neglect

Neglect occurs when a caregiver's failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care results in significant danger to the physical or mental health of an older person in his/her care.

• Self-Neglect

Self-neglect occurs when there is a significant danger to an elder person's physical or mental health because the elder person is unable or fails to provide him/herself with adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical or dental care.

WISCONSIN'S ELDER ABUSE LAW

Chapter 46.90 of the Wisconsin Statutes mandates each county to provide a publicized phone number to receive reports of suspected elder abuse and to designate a lead agency for investigation and reporting purposes. Most often, this is the county aging unit or department of social or human services.

Elder Abuse... It Can Happen to Anyone

Recognizing the need for greater awareness in the arena of elder abuse, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services launched a statewide public information campaign in 2004.

A dramatic black and white brochure and a series of posters were distributed to county government elder abuse agencies. The posters, featuring four different images of older victims, convey compelling messages. "Elder abuse victims can't always speak out for themselves." "You don't have to be hit to be abused." "One call can change everything." The photograph and message on the front cover of this report are components of the campaign.

Overall goals of the campaign are to increase awareness of elder abuse in all of its forms, to provide information about alternatives for the victim and to increase the reporting of incidents of elder abuse. Potential reporters are told, "If you witness abusive behavior, or suspect something is wrong --- **do something about it**. Let authorities know your concerns. You can remain anonymous."

As a follow-up to the elder abuse print campaign, the Department is now preparing public service announcements for use by radio stations throughout the state. In the coming months, listen for the tag line, "Report It!"

Lead agencies must begin investigation of physical abuse, neglect or self-neglect within 24 hours of receiving a report (excluding weekends and holidays) and within five working days of receiving a report of material abuse. Based on the results of its investigation, the lead agency may offer services to help solve the problem (subject to the limits of funding availability).

If necessary, lead agencies may notify the appropriate law enforcement agency. When abuse occurs in a nursing home, community based residential facility or by a licensed home health agency, the complaint is referred to the State Department of Health and Family Services for investigation.

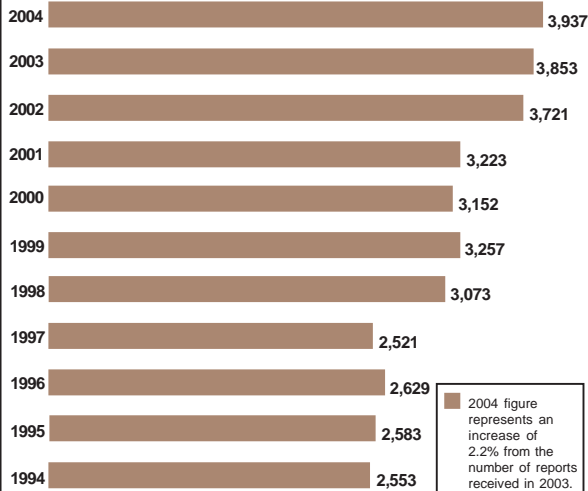
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The effort to stop elder abuse calls for a community-wide commitment to report and respond. Although the elder abuse law does not require reporting by attorneys or other professionals, the law **does** require counties to respond to voluntary reports. Competent adults have the right to decide where and how they live and whether or not they want intervention in their lives. Victims of elder abuse may refuse an investigation by an elder abuse worker. They may also refuse any help that is offered, so long as they are legally competent. In Wisconsin, help should be available if it is wanted and needed.

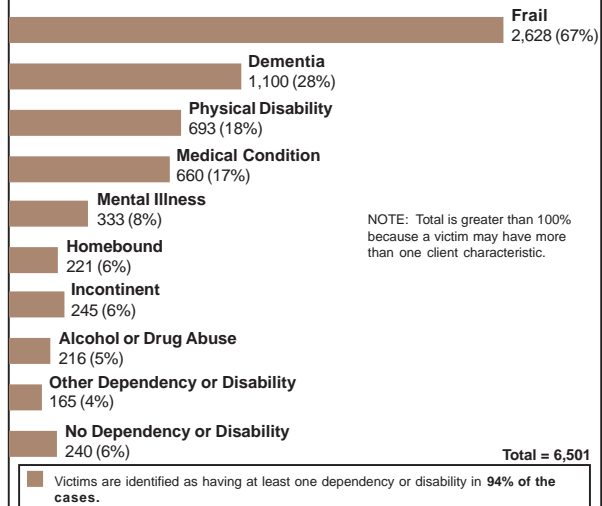
Wisconsin Elder Abuse

2004 DATA

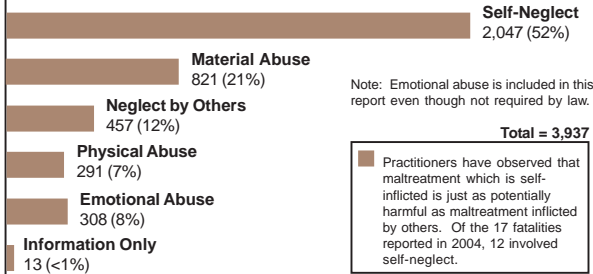
NUMBER OF REPORTS



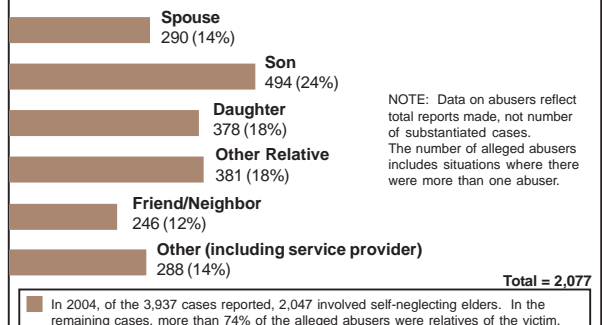
VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS



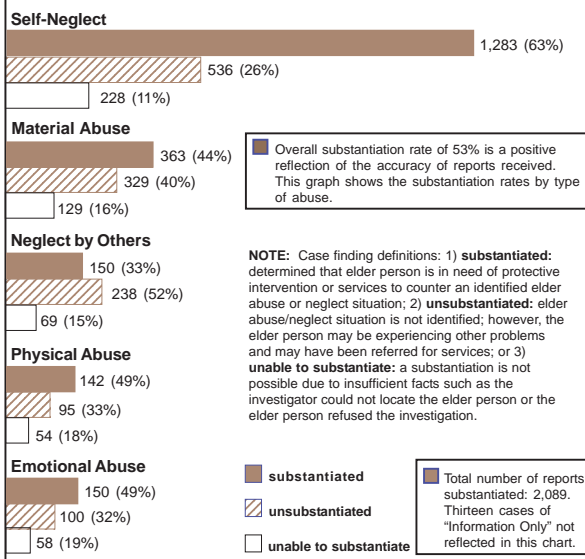
TYPES OF ABUSE



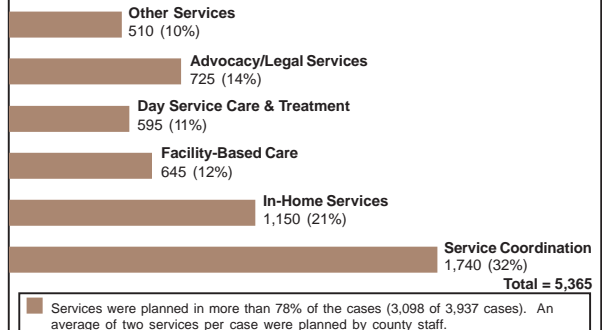
RELATIONSHIP OF ABUSER(S) TO VICTIM



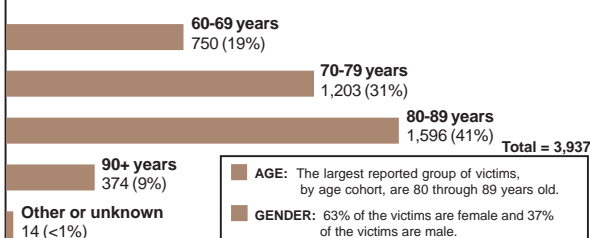
SUBSTANTIATION OF ABUSE



ARRAY OF SERVICES PLANNED



AGE AND GENDER OF VICTIM



ACTIONS TAKEN

