



Elderly Victims of Crime

**Pima County Attorney's Office
Victim Services Division**

Contact us Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(520) 740-5525

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INTRODUCTION

Effects of victimization

When elderly people are victimized, they often suffer greater physical, mental, and financial injuries than people of other age groups. Elderly victims are twice as likely to suffer serious physical injuries and more likely to require hospitalization than any other age group. Furthermore, the physiological process of aging brings with it a decreasing ability to heal after injury – both physically and mentally. Thus, some elderly victims may never fully recover from the trauma of their victimization. Also, the trauma that certain elderly victims suffer is worsened by financial difficulties. Because many elderly people live on a low or fixed income, often they cannot afford the professional services and products that could help them in the aftermath of a crime.

Common concerns and fears

Elderly people face a number of worries and fears when victimized. First, they may doubt their ability to meet the expectations of law enforcement and worry that officers will think they are incompetent. They may worry that a family member, upon learning of their victimization, will also think they are incompetent. Further, they may fear retaliation by the offender for reporting the crime. Finally, elderly people may experience feelings of guilt for “allowing” themselves to be victimized.

Victim Services and this resource

This booklet, prepared by the Pima County Attorney’s **Victim Services Division**, is intended to be a resource for seniors and their families in Pima County who are victims of crime or have suffered a traumatic event. It contains a general overview of services available in Tucson and Pima County. For information on a specific case or for a referral to community resources, victims are encouraged to call **(520) 740-5525**. **Victim Services** is will assist you by helping to restore your confidence, maintain your dignity, and ensure your rights as a victim in the state of Arizona.

VIOLENT CRIME AND THE ELDERLY

What is violent crime?

A crime of violence is a crime in which the offender uses or threatens to use violent force upon the victim. This entails crimes in which the violent act is the objective, such as murder, as well as crimes in which violence is the means to an end, such as robbery. The category of violent crime also includes rape, sexual assault, physical assault, as well as threats or attacks during a verbal confrontation.

Violent crime statistics

- Elderly Americans are far less likely to become crime victims than younger Americans. The violent crime rate against the elderly declined 14% between 1991 and 2000.
- In 2009, elderly people (age 65 or older) experienced far less violence and far fewer property crimes than younger people.

- In 2009, 22 out of every 1,000 violent crime victims were 65 years old or older.
- In 2009, the most common victimization among the elderly was simple assault, followed by robbery as the second most common, and aggravated assault the third most common.

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2009

ELDER ABUSE

What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is a term that refers to any intentional or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. Twenty percent of the elderly are abused by their caregivers. Forty-four percent of the perpetrators are adult children, spouses, or intimate partners. The following behaviors or conditions are recognized as elder abuse by Arizona criminal law:

Denial of Access – Refusal to allow entry of an elder abuse investigator, adult protective services worker and/or law enforcement into a home where assistance is needed.

Physical Abuse – Intentional infliction of physical harm, including skin bruising, pressure sores, bleeding, failure to thrive, malnutrition, dehydration, burns, bone fractures, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling, injury to internal organ, or any physical condition that jeopardizes health or welfare.

Sexual Abuse – Intentionally or knowingly engaging in sexual contact without the consent of that person that might result in torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; difficulty walking or sitting; pain, itching, bruising, or bleeding in genital area; or unexplained sexually transmitted diseases or genital infections

Confinement – Holding another person against his or her will and/or engaging in behavior that results in a person feeling as if he/she is unable to move about freely, or feeling as if he/she is unable to seek assistance.

Stalking – Maintaining visual or physical proximity to another person without that person's consent; tracking a person in such a manner as to cause the person to fear for his or her safety and/or the safety of that person's immediate family; directing verbal, written, or other threats, whether expressed or implied, on two or more occasions, over a period of time.

Emotional Abuse – A pattern of ridiculing or demeaning a person, making derogatory remarks about or to that person, and/or verbally harassing or threatening to inflict physical or emotional harm on that person.

Neglect – A pattern of conduct without the person's informed consent resulting in deprivation of medication, medical services, food, water, shelter, cooling, heating, or other

services necessary to maintain minimum physical or mental health. Telltale signs include dehydration, malnutrition, hypo/hyperthermia; excessive dirt or odor; inadequate clothing; absence of eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, or prosthesis; bedsores, signs of excess drugging or other misuse of medical treatment.

Financial Exploitation – Exhibiting disparity between income/assets and lifestyle; unexplained inability to pay bills, purchase food, or personal care items; inaccurate, confused, or no knowledge of finances; fear or anxiety when discussing finances; unprecedented transfer of assets from an older person to others; extraordinary interest by family member of older person’s assets.

Self-Neglect – Tragically, sometimes elders neglect their own care, which can lead to illness or injury. Self-neglect can include behaviors such as:

- Hoarding
- Failure to take essential medications or refusal to seek medical treatment for serious illness
- Poor hygiene
- Confusion
- Inability to attend to housekeeping
- Dehydration
- Leaving a burning stove unattended

Self-neglect accounts for the majority of cases reported to adult protective services. Sometimes the problem is paired with declining health, isolation, Alzheimer’s disease or dementia, or drug/alcohol dependency. In some cases, elders will be connected to community supports that allow them to continue living on their own. Other cases, such as depression or malnutrition, may be treated through medical intervention. If the problems are severe enough, a guardian may be appointed.

REPORTING ELDER ABUSE

Adult Protective Services (APS) (877) 767-2385 or (877) 815-8390 (TDD)
APS is the principal public agency responsible for investigating reported cases of elder and vulnerable adult abuse and for providing victims with treatment and protective services. If you suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation, call the APS Hotline.

Pima Council on Aging Ombudsman (520) 790-7262
The Ombudsman can investigate and resolve nursing home complaints and reports of abuse.

Law Enforcement 911
Local police and prosecuting attorneys may investigate and prosecute abuse, particularly cases involving sexual abuse or assault.

Elder Abuse and Later Life Domestic Violence Services

(520) 623-3341

The Administration of Resources and Choices (ARC) Program provides crisis intervention, case management, education, and training.

PROPERTY CRIMES

What is property crime?

Property crime includes home burglaries, pocket-picking, vandalism, theft of items left outside the home, theft of items left inside vehicles, and theft of motor vehicles.

Property crime statistics

- In 2009, property crime, not violence, made up the highest percentage of crime.
- In 2009, almost eight in ten crimes were property crimes.
- In 2009, about 40% of all property crimes were reported to the police.

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2009

Reporting property crime

If a crime is in progress, call 911. In Tucson, if the incident is not critical, call Tucson Police Department's non-emergency number (520) 791-4444. If calling outside city limits, call the Sheriff's Department (520) 351-4900.

IDENTITY THEFT

What is identity theft?

Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information without your permission to commit fraud or other crimes. Skilled identity thieves may use a variety of methods to gain access to your data. They may steal your mail, copy your records from their place of employment, pose as a landlord or employer to get your credit reports, obtain your credit or debit card numbers by "skimming" your information from a swiping machine, steal your wallet or purse, or pose as a legitimate business through email or by phone to obtain your personal information.

Identity theft is a serious crime. People whose identities have been stolen can spend years and thousands of dollars cleaning up the mess thieves make of one's good name and credit history. Victims of identity theft may lose job opportunities, may be refused loans for education, housing, or cars, and may even be arrested for crimes they did not commit. Humiliation, anger, and frustration are among the feelings victims experience as they navigate the process of recovering their identity.

Steps to take if your personal information has been lost or stolen

1. Close affected accounts, such as credit cards and bank accounts, immediately. When you open new accounts, place passwords on them (Don't use your maiden name, birth date, the last four digits of your Social Security Number, or your phone number).
2. Contact the toll-free number of any of the three consumer reporting companies listed below to place a fraud alert on your credit report:
Equifax: 1-888-766-0008
Experian: 1-888-397-3742
TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289
3. File a report with local law enforcement or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.
Tucson Police Department Fraud Unit (520) 791-4481
Pima County Sheriff's Department (520) 351-4900
Oro Valley Police (520) 229-4900
Marana Police (520) 382-2000
Sahuarita Police (520) 344-7000
4. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission
FTC's Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH ELDERLY VICTIMS

- Be attentive to whether victims are tired or not feeling well.
- Ask victims if they are having difficulty understanding you. Be sensitive to the possibility that they may have difficulty hearing or seeing; but do not assume such impairments. Ask victims if they have any special needs, such as eyeglasses or hearing aids, or if they need any medications.
- Ask victims whether they would like you to assist them in contacting a family member or friend.
- Repeat key words and phrases. Ask open-ended questions to ensure you are being understood.
- Protect the dignity of victims by including them in all decision-making conversations taking place in their presence.
- Provide victims with written information that summarizes the important points you communicated verbally so they can refer to this information later.
- In all your comments and interactions with elderly victims, their families, and other professionals involved in the case, focus on the goals of restoring confidence to and maintaining the dignity of the elderly victims.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Legal Resources

Elder Law Clinic: (520) 790-7262

Legal services provided by Pima Council on Aging in partnership with the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys

Southern Arizona Legal Aid (520) 623-9465

Pro bono services for clients who meet income eligibility

Lawyer Referral Service (520) 623-4625

Pima County Bar Association can assist in finding experienced lawyers for certain legal problems. The cost of the service is \$35 and includes ½ hour consultation

Proyecto VAWA (520) 623-4555

Legal assistance for immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. A pathway to lawful permanent resident status through U-Visas and the Violence Against Women Act

General Referral Resources

Armory Park Senior Center: (520) 791-4865

Socialization, recreation, education, information, nutrition, and social services support

Catholic Community Services: (520) 623-0344

Home assistance and counseling

Senior Resource Guide: (800) 955-8510

Free referral line for Tucson, Green Valley, Marana, Oro Valley, and Catalina

Counseling/Mental Health

Community Information and Referrals: (800) 352-3792

Information on immunization, financial assistance, unemployment insurance, and more

Administration of Resources and Choices (ARC) Services: (520) 327-2665

Elder abuse support services offered through ARC

PCOA Counseling Program: (520) 790-7262

Individual, couples, or family counseling sensitive to the needs of older adults or people with disabilities; subsidized or sliding fee scale services are available in-home or in-office. Provided by Jewish Family and Children Services.

Our Family Center: (520) 323-1708

Provides counseling services, including programs for older adults and people with disabilities

CPSA Services: (800) 771-9889
Free counseling and referral service through Community Partnership of Southern Arizona for adults with mental health or substance abuse problems

Reflection Family Services: (520) 795-0981
Counseling services concerning domestic violence, substance abuse, and couples counseling

SAMHC (24-hr. Crisis Line): (520) 622-6000
Crisis intervention, counseling, mental health screening and assessment, and consultations for family and caregivers. If someone is a danger to self or others, call 911

Financial Assistance

Crime Victim Compensation: (520) 740-5525
Assistance with medical bills, counseling, lost wages, funeral expenses

Pima Council on Aging: (520) 790-7262
Consumer issues, Medicare counseling, and personal budget assistance

Valley Assistance Services: (520) 625-5966
Case management, personal budget, and monetary assistance for Green Valley residents

ARC Financial Counselor: (520) 327-8250
Reverse mortgage counseling and personal budget assistance

DES Family Assistance: (520) 628-6810

Social Security: (800) 772-1213

Emergency Food Assistance

Community Food Bank: (520) 622-0525

PCOA Meals on Wheels: (520) 790-7262

Armory Park Senior Center: (520) 791-4865

Mobile Meals: (520) 622-1600

Housing Resources

24-Hr. Elder Shelter Hotline: (520) 339-2801
Free short-term emergency shelter for adults 60 and older.
Leave message on pager for callback to do intake.

CPLC HUD Apartments: (520) 622-4187
Subsidized rent for low income adults age 62 and older

Pio Decimo Barrio Viejo: (520) 623-4999
Affordable units for low income adults ages 62 and older

B'nai B'rith Covenant House: (520) 327-2200
Subsidized rent for low income adults age 62 and older

Utilities and Home Repair

Community Home Repair: (520) 745-2055
Provides emergency minor home repair on a sliding scale for low income residents of
Pima County

PCOA – Home Repair: (520) 790-7262
Home repair and referral program for low-income seniors

PPEP Human Services: (520) 622-3553
Emergency rental and utilities assistance

Salvation Army: (520) 622-5411
Emergency rental and utilities assistance

Interfaith Community Services: (520) 297-6049
Assistance with rent, utilities, door locks, prescriptions

Transportation

Coyote Run: (520) 229-4980
Sliding scale fees based on distance for adults 62 and older

Friends in Deed: (520) 625-1150
Volunteer-run program that assists seniors with transportation to
medical and Medicare appointments. Based in Green Valley.

Handi-Car: (520) 881-3391

Sun Tran: (520) 792-9222

Van Tran: (520) 798-1000

Tucson Special Services: (520) 791-4100

Veterans Services

Debt Management:

(800) 827-0648

Medical Center:

(520) 792-1450

Health Benefits:

(877) 222-8387

Life Insurance:

(800) 669-8477

VA Benefits:

(800) 827-1000



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