



Pima County Attorney's Office

Victim Services Division

Elder Victims of Crime A resource guide for Pima County

Resources for Victims of:

- Violent crime
- Property crime
- Identity Theft

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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. Elder victims are twice as likely to suffer serious physical injury and 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 elder victims may never fully recover from the trauma of their victimization. Also, the trauma that certain elder victims suffer is worsened by financial difficulties. Because many elderly people live on a low or fixed income, they often cannot afford the professional services and products that could help them in the aftermath of a crime.

Common Concerns and Fears

It is understandable why the elderly are fearful of crime. Elders face a number of additional 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, elder victims may experience feelings of guilt for “allowing” themselves to be victimized.

Victim Services and This Resource Guide

This booklet is to serve as 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, but for information on a specific case or a referral to community resources, victims are encouraged to call (724-5525). We are here to assist in restoring your confidence, maintaining your dignity, and ensuring 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 crime 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 persons age 65 or older experienced less violence and fewer property crimes than younger persons between 1993-2002.
- Elderly Americans are half as likely as younger people to become crime victims and the violent crime rate against elderly has declined 50% since 1973.
- Six out of every 1,000 violent crime victims every year were at least 65 years old or older.
- Among the elderly, victimization rates were highest among men, blacks, separated or divorced people and urban residents. 46% of victims were attacked and 29% were injured.

*U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Elder Abuse

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is a term referring 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. 10% of the elderly are abused by their relatives. Two thirds of the perpetrators are adult children or spouses. The following behaviors or conditions are recognized as elder abuse by Arizona criminal law:

Denial of Access— Refusing 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 any skin bruising, pressure sores, bleeding, failure to thrive, malnutrition, dehydration, burns, fracture of bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling, injury to any internal organ or physical condition which imperils health or welfare.

Sexual Abuse — Intentionally or knowingly engaging in sexual contact without consent of that person which might result in torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; difficulty in walking or sitting; pain, itching, bruising, or bleeding in genital area, unexplained venereal disease or genital infections.

Confinement – Holding another person against his or her will and or engaging in behavior which results in a person not feeling able to move about freely, or not feeling able to seek assistance.

Stalking — Maintaining visual or physical proximity to another person without that person's consent; tracking a person in such a manner 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, making derogatory remarks, verbally harassing or threatening to inflict physical or emotional harm.

Neglect — A pattern of conduct without the person's informed consent resulting in deprivation of food, water, medication, medical services, 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 lack of medication 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 house-keeping
- Dehydration

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 and 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 is the principal public agency responsible both 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: (877)767-2385
TDD: (877) 815-8390

Pima Council on Aging Ombudsman

The Ombudsman can investigate and resolve nursing home complaints and reports of abuse
(520)790-7262

Law Enforcement: 911

Local police, and prosecuting attorneys may investigate and prosecute abuse, particularly in cases involving sexual abuse or assault. Pima County Sheriff's Dept. has an Elder Abuse unit (520) 351-4810

Elder Abuse & Later Life Domestic Violence Services (Administration of Resources and Choices)

Provides crisis intervention, case management and education and training 623-3341 (ask for Deena Stewart)

Property Crimes

What is Property Crime?

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

Property Crime Statistics*

- Property crime, not violence, made up the highest percentage of crime against persons age 65 or older.
- Between 1993 and 2002, more than nine in ten crimes against the elderly were property crimes.
- About 1 in 5 of personal crimes against the elderly were thefts, compared to about 1 in 33 for persons ages 12-49.

**U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics*

Reporting Property Crime

If 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. Or if calling from outside city limits, call Sheriff's Department (520) 351-4900.

Identity Theft

Identity theft is 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 swiping machine, steal your wallet or purse, or pose as legitimate companies through email or the phone to get your information.

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

Steps to Take if Your Information has been Lost or Stolen

1. Close affected accounts, like credit cards and bank accounts, immediately. When you open new accounts, place passwords on them (Avoid using maiden name, birthdate, the last 4 digits of your Social Security number, or your phone number).
2. Contact the toll-free number of any of the three consumer reporting companies below to place a fraud alert on your credit report:

- Equifax: 1-888-766-0008; www.equifax.com
- Experian: 1-888-397-3742; www.experian.com
- TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com

3. File a report with local law enforcement or the police in the community where the identity theft took place. For example, Tucson Police Department Fraud Unit (520)791-4481.

4. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission

FTC's Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338

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 Attorney.

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 lawyer with experience with particular type of legal problem. The cost of the service is \$35 and includes 1/2 hour consultation

General Referral Resources

Senior Directory: 1-800-955-8510

Free referral line for Green Valley.

211 Info and Referral (520) 323-9373

Provides referrals for resources for all of Arizona.

Counseling / Mental Health

ARC Counseling Services: (520)327-2665

Elder Abuse Support Services, offered through Administration of Resources and Choices

Our Family Center: (520) 323-1708

Provider of counseling services, including program for older adults and people with disabilities

CPSA Services: 1-800-771-9889

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 couple counseling

SAMHC (24 hr Crisis Line): (520) 622-6000

Crisis Intervention, Counseling, Mental Health Screening and Assessment, Consultation for Family and Caregivers. **If someone is a danger to themselves or others, call 911.**

Financial Assistance

Crime Victim Compensation:(520) 724-5525

Assistance with medical bills, counseling, lost wages, funeral expenses

Pima Council on Aging: (520) 790-7262

Consumer issues, Medicare counseling, and personal budget assistance

Green Valley Assistance: (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: 1-800-772-1213

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) 566-1919

Free short-term emergency shelter for men & women 60 and older. Leave message on pager for call back 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

Chirpa provides emergency minor home repair on a sliding scale for low-income residents of Pima County.

PCOA—Home Repair: (520) 790-7262

Minor home repair and referral program for low-income seniors

PPEP Human Services: (520) 622-3553

Emergency rental and utilities assistance

Salvation Army: (520) 792-1111

Emergency rental and utilities assistance

Northwest Interfaith: (520) 297-6049

Assistance with rent, utilities, door locks, prescriptions

Transportation

Sun Shuttle Dial A Ride: (520) 792-1093

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

Sun Van: (520)798-1000

Tucson Special Services: (520)791-4100

Veteran Services

Debt Management: 1-800-827-0648

Medical Center: (520) 792-1450

Health Benefits: 1-877-222-8387

Life Insurance: 1-800-669-8477

VA Benefits: 1-800-827-1000

Considerations When Working with Elderly Victims:

- Be attentive to whether victims are tired or not feeling well
- Ask victims if they are having any 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 professional involved in the case, focus on the goals of restoring confidence to and maintaining the dignity of the elderly victims you work with